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THESIS

**THE EAGLE, THE BEAR, AND THE YURT: EVALUATING
KYRGYZSTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY BEHAVIOR WITH
THE UNITED STATES AND RUSSIA IN THE POST-9/11
SECURITY ENVIRONMENT**

by

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June 2005

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FOREIGN POLICY BEHAVIOR WITH THE UNITED STATES AND RUSSIA IN
THE POST-9/11 SECURITY ENVIRONMENT**

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ABSTRACT

The U.S.-led War on Terrorism necessitated engagement strategies with several small states. The policy motivations of small states, however, are often overlooked. Kyrgyzstan is an interesting case as it offered an airbase for the U.S.-led campaign in Afghanistan, but also offered a similar arrangement to Russia. Thus, the motivation of the small state, Kyrgyzstan, is being evaluated in its engagement with two larger powers.

This thesis argues that small state motivation revolves around how the state perceives the world it lives in. If the small state perceives a realist world, its behavior is commensurate with the capacity of small states in realist worlds. This leads to bandwagon behavior with larger powers, or balancing with larger powers against internal threats. If the small state views a complex interdependent world, then it uses what power it does have, like offering access to airbases, to leverage other benefits.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. A NEW GREAT GAME?

Despite their best intentions, U.S. President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin could not dissuade talk of U.S. and Russian competition in Central Asia and a 21st century “Great Game.” It was not for lack of effort. The two presidents issued a joint statement in May 2002 recognizing each other’s interest in cooperation in the areas of the former Soviet Union, vowing to support one another in the fight against global terrorism. In the joint declaration, the two leaders indicated that,

In Central Asia...we recognize our common interest in promoting the stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all the nations of this region. The United States and Russia reject the failed model of “Great Power” rivalry that can only increase the potential for conflict in those regions.¹

But analysts, academics, and pundits alike are drawn to the historical Great Game cliché. Modern day visions of Mackinder-like quests to control Eurasia’s heartland abound, with energy and geopolitics driving the competition between the United States and Russia.

Many of the assumptions of such great games mask the nuances underneath such grandiose visions. Outside the scope of this study, the supposed new “Great Game” might not either be great or a game. More appropriately, the assumptions of great game analogies channels readers to consider the motivations and strategies of only the key actors involved. Just as Russia and Great Britain were the foci of the great power competition in Central Asia and Afghanistan in the 19th century, so too are Russia and the United States allegedly jockeying for dominance and influence in the region in the 21st century. However, a major difference between 19th century and 21st Eurasia is that nation-states now exist in the space once occupied by khanates, clans, and nomadic peoples.

Often overlooked in modern Great Game analogies are the motivations, goals, and strategies of those states occupying the “playing board” of the Great Game. These states too conduct foreign policies, which reflect their position in the international order and

¹ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “Text of Joint Declaration,” 24 May 2002. Available online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/05/20020524-2.html> Last Accessed June 2005.

their capacity to address their concerns. Such is the case with Kyrgyzstan. A nation with only a formal fourteen year history but with a legacy of several centuries, Kyrgyzstan has recently found itself the focus of intense interest from the larger states. Like most small states, Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy with larger states is both framed and constrained by a peculiar combination of geographical, structural, and identity factors, which contribute to the broader strategies the state pursues.

B. FACTORS INFLUENCING KYRGYZSTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

1. Geographical Factors²

Several aspects of Kyrgyzstan's spatial and physical geography influence the priorities Kyrgyzstan seeks in its foreign policy. Kyrgyzstan shares a border with three former Soviet republics - Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan - as well as an 858 km border with China. Although border disputes have mostly been settled with its neighbors, Kyrgyzstan still has outstanding claims on its border demarcation with Uzbekistan, often straining relations between the two countries.

Relations with Kyrgyzstan's neighbors are mostly cordial, but retain latent potential to sour at any given moment. Kazakhstan has the most in common historically with Kyrgyzstan, but is substantially larger economically and militarily and also enjoys a closer bond with Russia. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan face similar problems as the smallest and poorest of the five former Soviet Republics. Tajikistan's uncontrolled mountainous border with Kyrgyzstan presents multiple challenges with trafficking and other illicit activities. Kyrgyzstan has kept a wary eye on its two most powerful neighbors, Uzbekistan and China. Kyrgyzstan fears Uzbekistan's inclinations to be a regional hegemon, and has often felt the wrath of its leader President Islam Karimov. Kyrgyzstan values its growing economic relationship with China, but also fears long-term losses of its sovereignty through China's soft, patient approach via economic purchasing and investment.

Kyrgyzstan's physical geography provides strengths as well as weaknesses. The country is 90% mountainous, with several valleys supporting a majority of the population. Kyrgyzstan's extreme terrain provides a highly desirable natural barrier with

² This section draws heavily on Olga Oliker and Thomas S. Szayna, "Sources of Conflict and Paths to U.S. Involvement" in Olga Oliker and Thomas S. Szayna ed., *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the U.S. Army* (Santa Monica, Calif: RAND, 2003), 318.

China and Tajikistan, but also opens itself up to traffickers and extremist groups who thrive in these uncontrolled environments. Kyrgyzstan's natural geography carries another double-sided consideration. Since the country is so mountainous, it controls several of the headways for much of the water in Central Asia. Water, and its by-products such as hydroelectric power, is relatively abundant in Kyrgyzstan. But Kyrgyzstan lacks other critical resources, specifically significant energy deposits like petroleum and natural gas, and the country must put great emphasis on securing these goods in its foreign and economic policy.

2. Structural Factors

The political system developed in Kyrgyzstan's first decade of independence experienced a gradual consolidation of power within the executive branch of government. Kyrgyzstan is considered a republic, with formal independence from the Soviet Union recognized as 31 August 1991. Until March 2005, the country had been ruled by only a single head of state, former President Askar Akayev. Several referenda passed since 1991 increased the executive's power at the expense of the legislature.³ The Kyrgyz Parliament, the Jorgorku Kenesh, is currently a 75-seat unicameral legislature. The President initiated several referenda since 1991 switching the parliament between unicameral and bicameral arrangements, intending to limit its ability to check the executive branch. The judicial branch is very weak and assumed to be under the influence of the executive. In sum, decision making for Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy is consolidated in an inner circle surrounding the President, with limited ability by the legislature and the population to influence foreign policy outcomes.

Kyrgyzstan pursued genuine market reform strategies since independence, but remains an economically poor nation. The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in the loss of many of the subsidies provided to the former Soviet republic by the central government. Massive de-industrialization followed, as the young country sought survival in the global economy. Lacking substantial natural resources, Kyrgyzstan chose to accept recommendations from the West to restructure its economy. These strategies, implemented and monitored with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund

³ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *The World Factbook 2005 - Kyrgyzstan*, Available online at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/kg.html> Last Accessed June 2005.

(IMF), focused on mass privatization, price liberalization, and currency reform.⁴ Although the country has weathered economic restructuring and has predominantly achieved macroeconomic stability, the country still faces severe economic hurdles in its attempt to increase prosperity. Thus, foreign policy decisions are acutely sensitive to economic advantages or disadvantages a particular nation might bring to Kyrgyzstan.

The Kyrgyz military was one of the first victims to economic necessity in the country's early years. Although the country inherited a Soviet division, it was in no position financially to sustain its combat capability. Additionally, several problematic issues plagued the new military. The Kyrgyz military had very few of its own non-Russian officers. Even those officers the Kyrgyz military did inherit lacked experience at senior levels of the Soviet military. The new Kyrgyz government lacked a formal Defense Ministry, which could advocate the needs and requirements of the military to the rest of government and provide focus and direction to military strategic, operational, and tactical thought. Finally, the military Kyrgyzstan did inherit inadequately matched the threats the country would face in its first decade and a half of independence.⁵ The Kyrgyz armed forces were equipped to fight a mechanized battle in the Cold War, not an insurgency operation in the mountains of Central Asia. Kyrgyzstan's military is ill-equipped and ill-prepared to handle the nation's security, and the government must pursue foreign assistance to guarantee territorial integrity.

3. Identity Factors

Kyrgyzstan has multiple identities, which shape the nation's approach and priorities in its foreign policy. To begin, Kyrgyzstan is one of the most multi-ethnic societies in Central Asia. The titular Kyrgyz population represents almost 65% of the nation's citizens, while Uzbeks (13.8%) and Russians (12.5%) make up the predominant minorities in the country. Geographically, northern Kyrgyzstan has a substantially more Russian presence than the south, especially in Bishkek, while the Uzbek population is

⁴ Rafis Abazov, *Historical Dictionary of Kyrgyzstan* (Lanham, Maryland and Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2004), 7.

⁵ William D. O'Malley and Roger N. McDermott, "Kyrgyzstan's Security Tightrope: Balancing its Relations with Moscow and Washington," U.S. Army Foreign Military Studies Office, September 2003. Available online at <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Kyrgystan/Kyrgystan.htm> Last accessed June 2005.

concentrated in the south and west of Kyrgyzstan near the Ferghana Valley. These divisions often lead to considerations of a “north-south” divide in the country, which coincide with the predominant patronage networks in the country.

Patronage networks in Kyrgyzstan span and overlap ethnicities, creating their own informal power bases. Before the Soviets installed the party architecture, most inhabitants of present day Kyrgyzstan identified themselves with a tribe, extended family, or region, which may or may not have coincided with a particular ethnic group.⁶ The communist experience modified and in some cases reinforced these local bonds, as these networks became the sole way to defy the state.⁷ These informal ties continue to influence state operation, and many Kyrgyz analysts suggest that this networked political system suppresses the development of broader political parties.⁸ Although evidence to quantify network politics is fleeting, it is enough to infer that the networks which dominate Kyrgyz internal policies will also be the networks which potentially dominate external and foreign policies.

Both the Kyrgyz and the Uzbeks belong to the Hanafi School of Sunni Islam. Kyrgyz and Uzbek Muslims of southern Kyrgyzstan are considered more religious than their northern counterparts.⁹ Kyrgyzstan’s leadership possesses a genuine fear of Islamic fundamentalism, which the Kyrgyz label as “wahhabi” movements. The Kyrgyz government often emphasizes the opposition to radical extremist and terrorist organizations in its interactions with foreign governments. Ethnic Russians are predominantly members of the Eastern Orthodox Christian Church.

C. THE KYRGYZ FOREIGN POLICY APPROACH

Given the preceding framework, Kyrgyzstan pursues a self-described multi-vector diplomatic agenda in which it actively seeks a “flexible and balanced foreign policy.”¹⁰ The stated goals of this policy are to secure and maintain the territorial integrity of

⁶ John Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia’s Island of Democracy?* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999), 39.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, 42.

⁹ Abazov, *Historical Dictionary of Kyrgyzstan*, 6.

¹⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, “Kyrgyzstan in a World Community,” Available online at <http://www.mfa.kg/index-en.php?vsection=68> Last accessed June 2005.

Kyrgyzstan, to establish a favorable environment for economic transition and democratic reform, and to protect the rights and liberties of Kyrgyz citizens.¹¹ Pursuing multiple vectors allows Kyrgyzstan to emphasize its role as a bridge for “friendship and cooperation” in a region of the world heavily influenced by European (through Russia), Arabian-Muslim, Persian, and Chinese cultures.¹² By maintaining open and prosperous relations with all these “vectors,” Kyrgyzstan hopes to increase its prosperity simultaneously with all.

Less clear in Kyrgyzstan’s multi-vector foreign policy is whether all the vectors are weighted equally. Kyrgyz diplomats would suggest not, deferring a special position to Russia in foreign policy matters. The Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs proudly states: “The ‘Eurasian civilization’ has been formed as geopolitical, economic, cultural, spiritual, and linguistic ground around Russia, and Kyrgyzstan belongs to the part of this ground.”¹³ The foreign policy approach stipulates that Kyrgyz interests “predetermine high-level political cooperation with Russia” without sacrificing its relations with other powers like the United States and China.¹⁴

In the continuum of international relations, state priorities can potentially change over time. It remains to be determined if Kyrgyzstan’s affinity to Russia remains as strong today as it was the day after it received its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. What would cause a shift in the strength of each of Kyrgyzstan’s foreign policy vectors? Is this a variable Kyrgyzstan can control? Opportunities may arise which allow Kyrgyzstan to readdress its foreign policy approach. On the other hand, these same opportunities might also motivate Kyrgyzstan to consolidate pre-existing arrangements. The terrorist attacks on the United States of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent U.S. response constitutes an opportunity window, which Kyrgyzstan faced. Did Kyrgyzstan use 9/11 to change its foreign policy vectors? To answer this question necessitates an evaluation of Kyrgyzstan’s perceptions of its position in the international order.

¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, “Kyrgyzstan in a World Community.”

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, “Kyrgyzstan and the Great Powers,” Available online at <http://www.mfa.kg/index-en.php?vsection=62> Last accessed 10 June 2005.

¹⁴ Ibid.

What Kyrgyzstan seeks to gain from its foreign policy is a function of how Kyrgyzstan sees the world. In order to gauge Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy priorities and strategies, this study attempts to determine Kyrgyz perceptions of the international environment and its position within that environment. The study uses two theoretical models, neorealism and neoliberalism, to help potentially explain Kyrgyz perceptions. To assist the measurement of Kyrgyz perceptions, the study compares the country's relations with two large powers, Russia and the United States, around a significant event – the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. The study seeks to compare Kyrgyzstan's relations with the United States with its relationship with Russia in light of 9/11, addressing if this significant event provided a strong enough impetus to Kyrgyzstan to either change its foreign policy approach or consolidate its existing strategy. Chapter II presents the two theoretical models used in the evaluation and delineates a research design for the two case studies evaluated. The subsequent two chapters will focus on a particular case. Chapter III evaluates Kyrgyzstan's relationship with the United States both before and after 9/11, while Chapter IV addresses Kyrgyzstan's relationship with Russia in the same manner. Finally, the data is assessed in Chapter V, where a reflection of its significance is presented. Before evaluating Kyrgyzstan's relationship with each of the powers before and after 9/11, it is necessary to establish the state of affairs within Kyrgyzstan at those two critical times.

D. KYRGYZSTAN: NET ASSESSMENT, JANUARY 2001

1. Political Situation

As Kyrgyzstan entered its tenth year of independence in 2001, the country found itself facing a wide array of internal and external challenges. 2000 was a highly controversial year for Kyrgyz politics. President Askar Akayev was elected to another five-year term as the nation's leader, continuing to be the sole individual to occupy the position since the country's independence. Akayev's election was widely criticized as being illegitimate, with multiple claims of voter manipulation and obstruction of opposition parties and candidates. The most notorious example was the arrest, incarceration, and eventual trial of Akayev's primary opponent, Feliks Kulov. Kulov was found guilty of corruption charges, which allegedly took place earlier in his career when he served as head of Kyrgyzstan's National Security Service.

The 2000 parliamentary elections were also criticized by the international community as being less than free and fair. These elections took place on the heels of several referenda designed by Akayev to strengthen the power of the executive at the expense of the legislature.¹⁵ Akayev's appointed election committee banned the most legitimate opposition parties on a wide range of technicalities. By early 2001, Akayev was still supremely in control and able to pursue his agenda without serious opposition from either a political challenger or from Parliamentary pressure or oversight. The U.S. non-governmental organization Freedom House charted Kyrgyzstan's slide from its progressive image, ranking the country in 2000 with a "6" in political rights and a "5" in civil liberties, each on a scale of 1 for most free and 7 for least free. Overall, the country was considered "not free."¹⁶

2. Economic Situation

By early 2001, Kyrgyzstan was just beginning to recover from a strong economic downturn associated with Russia's 1998 economic crisis. Kyrgyzstan's per capita GDP for 2000 was \$2700 with a 5.7% growth rate for the same year. Inflation for 2000 was at 18.7%.¹⁷ Agriculture was the principal revenue generator, comprising 34.2% of the GDP structure, followed by services (31.8%) and industry (23.3%).¹⁸ Kyrgyzstan exported \$503.8 million worth of goods in 2000, up from 1999's U.S. \$454 million but still shy of 1997's peak of U.S. \$609.5 million. Kyrgyz products were principally exported to Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. Kyrgyzstan imported U.S. \$555 million in goods in 2000, down from 1999's U.S. \$610.5 million and further from 1998's U.S. \$841.1 million.¹⁹ 2000 marked Kyrgyzstan's second full year as a member of the World Trade Organization.

¹⁵ International Crisis Group (ICG), "Kyrgyzstan at Ten: Trouble in the 'Island of Democracy,'" ICG Asia Report No. 22, 8.

¹⁶ Freedom House, "*Freedom in the World* Country Ratings." Spreadsheet available online at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/ratings/allscore04.xls> Last accessed June 2005.

¹⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 2001* (Washington D.C.: Imaging & Publishing Support, 2001), 281.

¹⁸ U.S. Business Information Service for the Newly Independent States (BISNIS), "Rethinking Eurasia: Spotlight on Russia's Siberia & Urals and the Kyrgyz Republic," BISNIS Outreach Presentation, July 2004, slide 4. Online at http://www.bisnis.doc.gov/bisnis/bisd/doc/presentation_jul04_kyrgyzstan.ppt Last accessed May 2005.

¹⁹ International Monetary Fund (IMF), *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook* (Washington D.C.: IMF Publication Services, 2004), 290.

3. Security Situation

Kyrgyzstan's security dilemma became readily apparent by the beginning of 2001. Both in 1999 and 2000, Kyrgyzstan was subject to a series of raids by members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). The 1999 IMU invasion was led by Juma Namangani and was purportedly intended as an attempt to create an insurgent stronghold in southern Kyrgyzstan from which to launch subsequent attacks into Uzbekistan. In the process, the insurgents took several hostages in both campaigns as well as overrunning several villages. Both incursions were eventually repelled by Kyrgyz and Uzbek forces over a period of weeks.

These attacks highlighted the inadequacy of Kyrgyzstan's military and security forces. At the time of the 1999 attacks, Kyrgyzstan only had 10,000 troops in uniform, with another approximately 5,000 in the border service. The Kyrgyz border guards had just taken responsibility for the defense and patrol of Kyrgyz borders from Russian forces in 1999. The Kyrgyz air arm was practically negligible, and the entire Kyrgyz military was ill-prepared to fight insurgencies. Given the potential of continued extremist incursions and the limited capability of Kyrgyzstan to address this threat, the country needed to look elsewhere to seek security support.

E. KYRGYZSTAN: NET ASSESSMENT, MAY 2005

1. Political Situation

By May 2005, the political situation in Kyrgyzstan had changed significantly. As early as 2002, President Akayev's rule over Kyrgyzstan had become fragile. A shooting during a public protest in Aksy by Kyrgyz security forces left six civilians dead and resulted in multiple calls for Akayev's resignation. Although Akayev tried to calm the situation by removing his Prime Minister and forcing the government to resign, he refused to step down himself. Akayev's term as president was set to expire in 2005. Although he publicly stated he had no intention to seek another term in office, many analysts believed he would either change his mind or pass off the presidency to a member of his inner circle. Media freedoms continued to deteriorate, and Akayev's two main political opponents continued to remain in prison.

The February and March 2005 elections would provide the spark leading to Akayev's ouster. Of the 75 seats being contested for the Kyrgyz parliament, only ten

percent were won by opposition candidates. Allegations of fraud, election manipulation, and nepotism rang throughout Kyrgyzstan, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) cited several irregularities in the election process.²⁰ During the second round of parliamentary elections, opposition candidates again failed to overcome Akayev and his party's grip on the political situation, causing protestors to storm several government buildings in southern Kyrgyzstan. Protests would spread to the capital Bishkek in the following days, with angry crowds eventually overrunning the Kyrgyz White House.²¹ President Akayev hastily fled the country during the melee, seeking asylum in Russia. An interim government was formed after Akayev's departure, with Kurmanbek Bakiev leading the country as acting President and Prime Minister. The contested parliament was sworn into office, and President Akayev formally resigned on 4 April 2005. Presidential elections were moved forward to 10 July 2005.

2. Economic Situation

Kyrgyzstan continued another year of modest but consistent economic growth in 2004. Kyrgyzstan's per capita GDP for 2004 was down to \$1700 with a 6.0% growth rate for the same year. Inflation rates were significantly down since 2000, stabilizing at 3.2%.²² Agriculture still generated significant revenue for Kyrgyzstan, comprising 38.5% of the GDP structure, sharing the lead with services at 38.7%. Industrial contribution to GDP fell slightly to 22.8% of the economy.²³ Kyrgyzstan's estimated exports for 2004 were U.S. \$646.7 million, an increase since 2000. Imports also increased since 2000, with 2004 estimates at U.S. \$775.1 million for 2004.

3. Security Situation

From a security perspective, Kyrgyzstan found itself on the world stage as a contributor to the U.S.-led Global War on Terror. Kyrgyzstan was quick to lend assistance to the United States after the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. It offered its international airport as an airbase for operations in

²⁰ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) International Election Observation Mission, "Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions," Parliamentary Elections, The Kyrgyz Republic, 27 February 2005. Online at http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2005/02/4334_en.pdf Last accessed June 2005.

²¹ Jim Nichol, "Coups in Kyrgyzstan: Developments and Implications," Congressional Research Service (CRS) for Congress RL 32864, 14 April 2005, 2.

²² Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 2005 – Kyrgyzstan*.

²³ BISNIS outreach briefing, slide 4.

Afghanistan. Following the establishment of the Coalition airbase at Manas, Kyrgyzstan also offered an airbase to the Russian Air Force as part of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2003. Kyrgyzstan was in the unique position of hosting deployed forces of two former enemies, the United States and Russia, with the two airbases only 30 km from one another.

Whether these deployments provided real or perceived security for Kyrgyzstan, the fact is that the likelihood of extremist incursions like those of 1999 and 2000 was significantly diminished by 2005. Although isolated terrorist attacks had occurred since 2001, no major extremist operations had been undertaken. Kyrgyz security forces were still closely tracking the activities of the IMU, which had taken significant losses to its membership through its contribution to the Taliban's resistance to U.S. attacks.²⁴ Kyrgyzstan had begun to pay more attention since 2001 to the rise of the Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahir (HT), whose advocacy for an Islamic caliphate in Central Asia disturbed Kyrgyz leaders. Although HT allegedly promotes non-violent means, there had been multiple instances of Kyrgyz security forces apprehending and arresting HT members on anti-extremist grounds.

Finally, Afghanistan did continue to be considered a security threat because of reinvigorated opium production and distribution following the fall of the Taliban. Opium production in Afghanistan had a banner year in 2004, simultaneous to a crackdown on distribution through Iran. To compensate, narcotics traffickers are taking advantage of Kyrgyzstan's proximity to Tajikistan and of the northern route eventually leading to Russia and west Europe, thriving off the rugged terrain in the country, which is advantageous to law enforcement avoidance. Despite U.S. and European interest to address this problem, most analysts predict that current Afghan production levels will stay consistent in the short-term.

Before applying these two net assessments to the rest of the data collection, it is first necessary to present the theoretical models to be used in the study and to chart out how data will be collected to assist in the research.

²⁴ International Crisis Group (ICG), "Is Radical Islam Inevitable in Central Asia? Priorities for Engagement," ICG Asia Report No. 72, 22 December 2003, 7-8.

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II. THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS OF KYRGYZ FOREIGN POLICY BEHAVIOR WITH GREAT POWERS

A. INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to evaluate Kyrgyz foreign policy behavior toward Russia and the United States after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. How can Kyrgyzstan manage complex foreign policies with multiple large powers simultaneously, and has 9/11 changed the dynamic of these engagements? What do rational Kyrgyz decision-makers consider when committing themselves to a specific engagement strategy with a power such as the United States or Russia? In practical terms, is Kyrgyzstan being opportunistic, or is it motivated by larger issues and longer-term strategies? These are questions of small state behavior, and this study's overarching goal is to contribute to a framework for explaining foreign policy choices by weak states regarding great powers.

Inquiring into the logic, perceptions, and realities of small states helps U.S. policy-makers formulate their own strategies. If the Global War on Terror is truly global, then the United States must expect continual interaction with small states during the execution of its campaign. Gaining insight to long-term motivations, interests, and allegiances helps frame the nature and potential strategies of small state leaders, allowing U.S. decision makers to take realistic approaches when cooperating with small states. It is in the United States' best interest to accurately evaluate small state intentions, for such insight helps prevent unwise engagements. Additionally, careful evaluation into small states' goals and long-term inclinations potentially helps keep U.S. expectations from exceeding the small state's capability to meet them.

Are small states as weak as they appear, and do they have any influence in their interaction with large states? This is a question of power or lack thereof, and different theoretical approaches suggest different outcomes for small states in the international order. Determining how Kyrgyzstan perceives its world, then, will help us evaluate specific small state policies. A particular policy will reflect the perceived options available. The major theoretical models considered are neorealism and neoliberalism. Each offers a different argument of where the small state fits, and each offers different strategies for small states based on their position in the international community.

B. NEOREALIST EXPLANATIONS OF SMALL STATE BEHAVIOR

1. Neorealism and Balance of Power Theories

Neorealists view the international system as a decentralized and anarchic environment where a constant state of war or preparation for it characterizes the interaction of the units.²⁵ This Hobbesian propensity for international conflict, or the never-ending fear of it, frames all relationships in the international arena since no higher ruling authority exists to protect individual states.²⁶ This anarchy motivates the units within the system, states, to survive through self-help strategies – they are on their own to provide for their security.²⁷

Kenneth Waltz argues that the international system revolves around states because the state survives as the principal actor within the system. All states, though, are not created equal. Neorealism contends that states function alike, as they perform similar tasks to one another. In particular, all states, large and small, are concerned above all for their security. Survival is the critical and preeminent task of a state's agenda, always a precondition to pursuing further goals.²⁸ State capacity to address its security needs, though, varies. The ability of one state to sufficiently provide for its own security will rest on the state's power.

Neorealists focus on power, struggle and accommodation in their evaluation of the international environment.²⁹ Waltz argues that within the system a finite distribution of capability exists among the states. Thus relative capabilities differentiate the strong from the weak, as powerful states become the major actors in the entire system.³⁰ The implication for smaller states is immense. Small states by definition do not possess the same power capacity that strong states do. Small states must choose appropriate survival strategies which consider the constraining effects of the system, which in turn revolves around the interactions of strong powers.

²⁵ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1979), 88.

²⁶ Ibid., 103-104.

²⁷ Ibid., 104.

²⁸ Ibid., 91.

²⁹ Ibid., 113.

³⁰ Ibid., 94.

Small states are considered weak since they lack the material power inherent in strong states. Weak states must address their security in a world where force is the principal language spoken, for the capability and the willingness to use force gives the strong state its power. Waltz emphasizes that the omnipresent capability to use force is what gives power its leverage, not the actual use of military power.³¹ Through the distribution of capabilities, only the great powers possess the force capability to exert leverage, and this leverage becomes the power which great states own and weak states do not. As Waltz relates, “...an agent is powerful to the extent that he affects others more than they affect him. The weak understand this; the strong do not.”³²

Weakness can be a double-edged sword. Neorealists contend weak state behavior is constrained not by deferential respect to a stronger state’s “rightfulness of rule,” but rather by a rational decision not to provoke a larger state with a superior power advantage.³³ On the other hand, Waltz also suggests that truly weak states might enjoy some freedom of maneuver since strong states are little concerned with the negligible impact of a weak state on the international order.³⁴ This highlights just how marginal weak states are considered in the neorealist international order. Small states, however, do interact with larger powers in a neorealist world and neorealists find explanations of these interactions problematic.

Evaluating Kyrgyz behavior as a small state engaging a larger power such as Russia or the United States must include the nature of interaction between the parties. Given an unequal distribution of power among states at the systemic level, neorealists predominantly emphasize interactions among and between great powers. Great powers may at times cooperate with small states. This cooperation, however, is solely based on the necessities of security and survival and will only last as long as is necessary to achieve the desired security effect. The structure of the system limits cooperation

³¹ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* 191.

³² Ibid., 192.

³³ Ibid., 113.

³⁴ Ibid.

between states since a state must consistently seek to protect itself in a self-help system while simultaneously avoiding becoming excessively reliant on another state's goods, services, and power capabilities through cooperation.³⁵

Waltz feels larger states might pursue some cooperative agreements, but would not willingly place themselves in dependent situations. Small states, on the other hand, might be forced into highly dependent engagements with larger powers even though the costs of such an engagement are excessively high.³⁶ High interdependence equals high vulnerability and this is to be avoided at all costs.³⁷

For realists, the question of inequalities is embedded in the definition of interdependence, since certain relationships contain various mixtures of dependence for some nations and independence for others.³⁸ This unequal distribution of capability leads to various levels of choice: some nations have great ability to make alternate choices, others do not. Unsurprisingly, neorealists believe great powers have the luxury of choice; weak states do not. The more dependent a state is on another, the less leverage it has to influence the relationship.³⁹ Weak states in the neorealist world lack the weight to manipulate relationships with great powers and are often cornered into uneven relationships to guarantee their survival while lacking the ability to change the agreement.

Kenneth Waltz in the end ignores and marginalizes small states in the international order. His quintessential balance of power theory revolves around the great states, focusing on the advantages and disadvantages of large and small numbered systems. He consistently reminds the reader that his propositions focus on international politics and not on foreign policies. Since his debate revolves around great powers, Waltz can only set the framework for small states to seek their survival. Other neorealist authors, in turn, continue the debate and provide better explanations of small state behavior.

³⁵ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* 106.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 153.

³⁹ Ibid.

2. Bandwagoning Behavior

Stephen Walt's principal contribution to neorealist theory is his proposition that states base their alliance choice on perceived threats rather than power. In addition to new considerations of threat perception, Walt also offers several explanations of small state behavior in a neorealist order. All states, large and small, weigh variations of another state's aggregate power, proximity, offensive capability, and offensive intentions when choosing their allies.⁴⁰ Walt believes states will predominantly balance against the most threatening power based on these four sources of threat. Some states, though, pursue bandwagoning strategies and Walt feels weak states are the predominant bandwagon candidates.

Three principal reasons force states to bandwagon, and Walt explicitly considers these to be small and weak state characteristics. First, a small state is simply more vulnerable to the pressure and power of a larger power and the capability it could add to either side would be negligible. If a state's contribution is unlikely to influence the outcome of a stand-off between two other powers, it is more likely to pick the winning side.⁴¹ Second, weak states in particular are inclined to bandwagon if no other alternative exists. Aligning with the most threatening state might be the only choice if national survival is at stake and no other external support is available.⁴² Finally, small and weak states are likely to bandwagon if a threatening great power is geographically proximate since the weak state views itself as the first to bear the brunt of an attack. Walt argues that these bandwagoning traits contribute to "sphere of influence" environments where small states rationally weigh their options in the face of a great power with an inclination to use its influence.⁴³ They choose to bandwagon rather than face possible occupation or annexation. Walt's propositions help when evaluating small state behavior at the systemic level. Some neorealists, though, consider sub-systemic factors, which might influence small state behavior as well.

⁴⁰ Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* Vol. 9 No. 4 (Spring 1985), 8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11.

3. Omnibalancing

A final neorealist approach applicable to the study of small state behavior toward large powers attempts to incorporate both domestic and systemic factors. Steven David offers a theory of omnibalancing specifically addressing Third World alignment trends at the end of the Cold War. Although David's theory still rests on the assumption that threats will be resisted, he suggests that Third World leaders will counter all threats, both external and internal. David puts state survival first, but suggests that personal survival of Third World leaders matters too.

Expanding on his approach, David presents three avenues a developing state's leader might use when interacting with a great power. First, the leader could appease secondary external adversaries so he could focus on a primary external adversary just as a developed state would (align with one threat to balancing against another more pressing external threat). Next, Third World leaders could appease international allies of domestic minorities within their territory (external balancing against an internal threat). David characterizes this as balancing, as aligning with the external power offsets the immediate threat of an internal challenge. Finally, David suggests that Third World leaders may protect themselves against both external and internal threats at the expense of the state (external balancing for elite survival). Such alignment with the large state helps keep the leader in power, ensuring personal survival.⁴⁴

David's inclusion of domestic factors into the small state decision making process is particularly insightful. Third World countries are often formed from colonial and imperial possessions, leaving the surviving nation-state with an artificially constructed mix of sub-national groups with conflicting interests.⁴⁵ Persistent authoritarian regimes and illegitimate governments amplify divisions within the state, and ensuing challenges to power emerge from within.⁴⁶ Finally, a lack of popular mandate suggests a limited elite group is making foreign policy decisions for the state. Given the choice of a

⁴⁴ Steven R. David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (January 1991), 235-236.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

strategic decision bad for the state but good for elite power consolidation versus one good for the state but detrimental for their hold on power, elites will often choose the former.⁴⁷

In sum, small states must walk precariously in a neorealist world. Most neorealist proponents agree that the international order centers on great powers. Small states maneuver, in turn, in response to or in relation with these great powers. Small states must focus on their survival given this anarchic environment, with several potential approaches available to the state. Common neorealist explanations of small state behavior include traditional balance of power and bandwagon outcomes, or balancing against both external and internal threats. Whichever strategy chosen, survival is the predominant task. Power remains outside of the small states reach.

C. NEOLIBERAL EXPLANATIONS OF SMALL STATE BEHAVIOR

1. Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism offers an alternative framework powerful enough to address small state behavior with great powers. To begin with, neoliberal institutional theories are congruent with realism on several key issues. Neoliberal proponents consider states the primary international actor just as realists do, agreeing that they operate as unitary-rational actors in an anarchic order.⁴⁸ Neoliberal institutionalism however chides realism's pessimistic outlook on international cooperation, focusing rather on the potential for states to work together.⁴⁹ Neoliberals emphasize, through game theory and prisoner dilemma interactions, that conditional cooperation is more likely to occur if interactions are highly iterative; for states, multiple mutual interactions reinforce cooperation as the best long-term strategy.⁵⁰ Additionally, neoliberals break from realists over the primacy of security in the international order, providing a more optimistic framework for states to interact.

Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye argue that, given sufficient interdependence among most states, an international environment not necessarily dominated by security as

⁴⁷ David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," 243.

⁴⁸ Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism" in *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*, David A. Baldwin, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 121.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 122.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

the pre-eminent agenda item could emerge.⁵¹ This does not mean that security is never discussed in state interactions. Rather, they believe security's role is contingent upon the degree and nature of interdependence among states and that at certain times other issues can prove to be the focal point between two states.⁵² In turn, an international environment not dominated by security concerns leads to state interactions without the threat of military force constraining the relationship. In a densely interdependent environment where traditional "high" politics are deemphasized in relation to "low" political issues such as economics or ecological disputes, military power loses its fungibility.⁵³ The actual use of military force by one side in these interdependent relationships would be so detrimental to the overall relationship that the costs would exceed any potential gain.

Neoliberals do not necessarily sideline military power and security. If a state finds itself in an extreme security dilemma, the military option might be the expected outcome. Keohane and Nye emphasize, though, that among advanced industrial countries this is unlikely.⁵⁴ Less clear is if this is also true for developing countries. One purpose of this study is to address if non-industrial countries can also live in a world where high politics are deemphasized. Additionally, this is not to say that conflict and dispute have been eliminated between states. Rather, Keohane and Nye suggest that the origins of one state's influence over the next exist primarily outside the military spectrum, and such resources as economic capabilities are used to settle the conflicts that are expected to arise. To show how power can be obtained by non-military means, Keohane and Nye propose alternative definitions of sensitivity and vulnerability, arguing that power and influence from state to state can come from the nature of the relationship itself.

2. Sensitivity, Vulnerability, and Power

Power is a function of sensitivity and vulnerability, and each characteristic focuses on a state's capacity to respond to changes in a relationship. Keohane and Nye

⁵¹ Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 25.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 27.

define sensitivity as the “degree of responsiveness within a policy framework.”⁵⁵ A state’s sensitivity to an issue depends on how quickly changes by an external source impact the state, in addition to the magnitude of the costs of such changes. A critical assumption regarding sensitivity is that the nature of the relationship between states does not change and, principally, concerns shorter timeframes.⁵⁶ If the state is immediately influenced by policy changes from another actor, the state is considered sensitive on that issue of interdependence. Whereas sensitivity impacts states in the short term, vulnerability impacts states in the long term.

Whether an interdependent relationship entails vulnerability depends on the state’s ability to formulate alternative policy plans and the costs associated there with.⁵⁷ With sensitivity, the state suffers costly ramifications from changes in the other state’s behavior, and these are measured immediately, before the affected state could respond in kind with a counter-policy. With vulnerability, the state suffers costly effects even after it implements a policy change indicating a deeper liability to that relationship. Policy changes often take a substantial amount of time to bear fruit. But if they are effective in decreasing the costs and speed with which external changes affect the state, then the state is not vulnerable; it is merely sensitive. However, if the state is vulnerable it will continue to pay costs whenever the other state takes an adverse action regardless of the policy changes it adopts. Additionally, Keohane and Nye believe it is not just the costs itself which makes a particular relationship one of vulnerability, but also the political will to bear those costs.⁵⁸ If one state is vulnerable to the next on a particular issue, it will have to force itself to the other state’s “rules of the game” by opening itself up to an asymmetrical relationship. Power, thus, emerges from these asymmetrical relationships.⁵⁹

Keohane and Nye prioritize vulnerability over sensitivity when evaluating an interdependent relationship, but both are necessary for an evaluation of a small state –

⁵⁵ Keohane and Nye, 12.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

great power relationship.⁶⁰ Sensitivity on its own is insufficient to evaluate the nature of the interdependent relations at a given time, failing to point to the long-term implications of a given relationship, which an assessment of vulnerability allows. If evaluated over multiple periods of time, though, sensitivity levels might give clues to more engrained vulnerability trends.

Vulnerability is bad for all states, small and large. Since neoliberals contend that asymmetrical interdependencies are the source of power, they agree with realists that all states should try to decrease the burden of asymmetrical relationships in order to minimize vulnerability. For our discussion, one small state, Kyrgyzstan, potentially has at its disposal sources of power not available in a realist world when dealing with two great powers, the United States and Russia. Of course, this assumes that Kyrgyzstan has something the great powers want. This assumption will be empirically investigated below.

Neoliberal explanations of small state behavior suggest that these states might have more room to maneuver with large powers than the realist world allows. Since power revolves around asymmetrical interdependencies rather than military strength, small states have potentially the same tools at their disposal as the large powers when negotiating and managing relationships. If the small state, through an asymmetrical relationship, maintains a superior position on a particular issue, it can use this position as leverage when pursuing policy goals. The limitations of this strategy for small states, though, are the same as for large states. The power derived from an asymmetrical interdependency only goes as far as the specific issue area involved. Whether a state can maximize its overall position with another state by leveraging its comparative advantage on a particular issue depends on the intensity of the asymmetrical interdependency and the nature of the relationship.⁶¹ A state which is weak in a particular issue might try to link that issue to one in which the state is stronger.⁶² The opposite (larger) state, though, must have a reason it commits itself to an asymmetrical-disadvantaged relationship with a

⁶⁰ Keohane and Nye, 15.

⁶¹ Neoliberalism believes that states, although the primary actor, are not the only actor and that transnational and nongovernmental actors can also interact with states, or each other. See Keohane and Nye, 24-26.

⁶² Keohane and Nye, 31.

small state. The larger state might be in a position where no other actor could provide such goods or services, thus remaining susceptible to issue linkage and vulnerable to the relationship.

3. Complex Interdependence

An evaluation of interdependency should be held up against an ideal type to provide a relative picture of its depth. Keohane and Nye paint a world with two opposite ideal type environments at the ends of a spectrum. On one side is realism, where high politics reign as states maneuver in competition with one another, usually in war.⁶³ At the other end of the spectrum is their own ideal type – complex interdependence – characterized by factors alien to realists. The complex interdependence world involves multiple channels of interaction at levels below the state, including transnational-type interactions. In this complex interdependence world, war is not the primary interaction among states, and Keohane and Nye suggest that at any given time there is no hierarchy of interests. Additionally, military force is not used by governments on one another in a complex interdependence world since the ramifications of such use would be cost-prohibitive.⁶⁴

From the small state's viewpoint, this is a much better world to live in since military force is deemphasized and other avenues of interaction are available. Keohane and Nye suggest a unique political process coincides with the complex interdependent world, one which offers the small state avenues for potentially influencing its interaction with both single and multiple great powers. Issue linkage, as already described, is not the only strategy available to states in an interdependent relationship. The use of international organizations is especially important for small states to advance their cause.⁶⁵ Agenda setting in such fora also allows states to introduce issues, which would not have been able to be prioritized on purely bilateral levels in a realist world dictated by military power asymmetries. Although complex interdependence is an ideal type, it is

⁶³ Keohane and Nye, 24.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 25.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 31.

still a useful benchmark to compare the web of interdependencies encapsulating the small state. These interdependencies allow a broader evaluation of the vulnerabilities and leverage a small state faces.

D. RESEARCH DESIGN

1. Introduction

Both neorealism and neoliberalism have possible explanations for Kyrgyz behavior with Russia and the United States, and both potentially might be able to provide insight to current and future concerns of the Kyrgyz leadership. Keohane and Nye suggest that a realist ideal-type world exists opposite of their complex interdependence type environment, and admit few specific cases in the international order fit perfectly at either extreme. Most situations, they believe, lie somewhere in between. Aside from an equally theoretical perfect middle point between realism and complex interdependence, specific outcomes could favor either one or the other models when analyzed. Determining where Kyrgyzstan finds itself on this scale helps us determine how Kyrgyzstan interprets reality. Knowing Kyrgyz perceptions of reality, in turn, helps us predict future Kyrgyz policy inclinations.⁶⁶ Quite simply, we want to know how Kyrgyz policy makers rationally choose engagement strategies and preferred outcomes based on realistic perceptions. Knowing this will help U.S. policy makers arm themselves with appropriate long-term strategies in Central Asia tailored to the nuances of Kyrgyz behavior.

Since this study focuses on a particular small state's behavior with larger states, we can focus on characteristics, which might highlight Kyrgyz perceptions of reality. Behavior which suggests that Kyrgyzstan finds itself in a realist world include tendencies to balance against powers or threats as Waltz or Walt advocate respectively, or possibly bandwagon as Walt believes small states do. Finally, indications that Kyrgyzstan is balancing against both internal and external threats, or that elite survival is paramount when choosing alliances, indicates behavior commensurate with David's omnibalancing.

On the other hand, Kyrgyz behavior which deemphasizes security and military force while highlighting multiple interaction channels within elements of both

⁶⁶ It is possible that behavior seen by a particular state might not equate to the articulated threat perception. Nonetheless, an evaluation of these perceptions still assists our understanding of the exigencies of small state foreign policy behavior.

Kyrgyzstan and the great powers suggests characteristics of Keohane and Nye's complex interdependence world. Related strategies include Kyrgyz tendencies to link agenda items to maximize leverage of issue areas of strength like geography to Kyrgyz weak areas like economics. Now that it has been determined what indicates a particular reality, the next task is to measure how Kyrgyzstan perceives its reality.

2. Vulnerability and Sensitivity Assessment

Both realism and complex interdependence agree that vulnerabilities are bad, regardless of the peculiarities of each model's definition of the word. The difference between the two deals with a small state's capacity to deal with vulnerability. Realist outcomes preordain small and weak states to certain vulnerabilities with large powers, limiting decisions to those prioritizing security. Complex interdependence outcomes allow all states, including small ones, to fight vulnerabilities through the strategies inherent in neoliberal approaches, centered on the comparative advantages of the state within particular issues. Evaluating how Kyrgyzstan handles its vulnerabilities helps us assess the nature of Kyrgyz perceptions and, in turn, help us gauge the inclinations of future Kyrgyz policy choices. How Kyrgyzstan handles vulnerability, though, is not a static assessment. Rather, this entails an evaluation of the Kyrgyz relationship with larger powers over time to see if changes in vulnerability occurred and whether any behavior can be deduced from such changes in vulnerability.

To simply evaluate changes in Kyrgyz vulnerability with a single large power limits our ability to evaluate the dynamics between multiple units. Thus, this study focuses on Kyrgyz vulnerabilities with two of the largest states it interacts with – the United States and Russia. The research will utilize a cross-case approach evaluating Kyrgyz vulnerabilities with great powers. "Great Power," it must be emphasized, is from Kyrgyzstan's perspective. Each of these nations brings a unique and powerful combination of geopolitical, economic, and security capabilities unmatched by regional countries like Iran or Turkey or neighbors such as Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan. China would qualify as an additional test case, but is being withheld to limit the study's scope. A major assumption in this paper is that NATO policy toward Kyrgyzstan is congruent with U.S. policy, since the United States has predominantly handled negotiations concerning NATO involvement.

Measuring vulnerability is problematic since vulnerability is a long-term evaluation, measurable only after a policy change has been implemented. To aid in evaluating vulnerability, this paper will measure and compare levels of sensitivity at two points in time, ultimately using changes in sensitivity in a relationship as an indicator of changes in vulnerability over time. The two snapshots will capture Kyrgyzstan's sensitivity with each of the great powers, and a comparison of the two will offer insight to vulnerability changes. Since the study revolves around the extent of Kyrgyz vulnerability, a domestic policy change must be present in response to an external stimulus in order to evaluate the long-term nature of Kyrgyz interdependence on that issue. Thus quantified in simplest terms, this study will attempt to measure the impact of Kyrgyzstan's embrace of increased U.S. engagement in Kyrgyzstan on Kyrgyz interdependence with great powers such as Russia (see Figure 1).

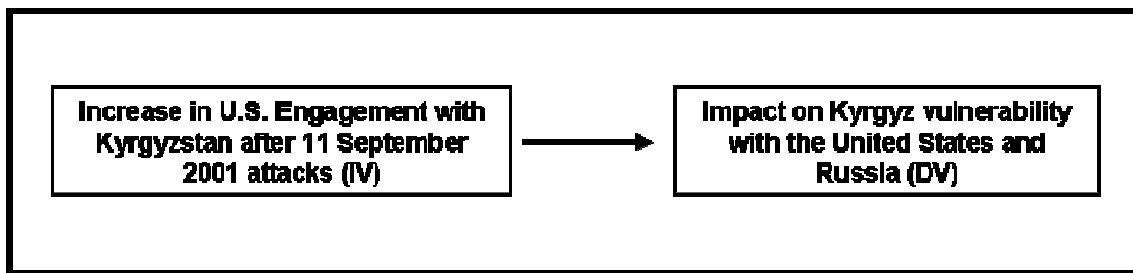


Figure 1. Research Causal Chain

The policy change in question is Kyrgyz acceptance of increased U.S. engagement efforts after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. The Kyrgyz government, under President Askar Akayev, methodically chose to accept both an increased U.S. engagement strategy as well as hosting U.S. and coalition forces for Operation Enduring Freedom. This decision altered the traditional framework in the region between Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and to a certain extent China, as the United States joined the other regional powers with a strong interest in Central Asia.

The two snapshot dates for sensitivity evaluation will be 1 January 2001 and 31 May 2005. Although Kyrgyzstan did not authorize U.S. forces to deploy to Manas airport until December 2001, January 2001 allows for a clean separation between the pre- and post-9/11 timeframes. The difference in sensitivity levels between 1 January 2001

and 10 September 2001 is expected to be negligible, and using 1 January allows for a convenient end to the calendar year, potentially simplifying data interpretation for annual-type statistics. The four-year, five-month timeframe is chosen to allow enough time for policy changes to take place and includes any U.S. or Russian factors in recent Kyrgyz internal unrest. The long-term impact of President Akayev's departure is important, and congruencies or variations in Kyrgyz policy are of great interest to U.S. policy makers.

The independent variable, U.S. engagement, is defined in this paper as any diplomatic, economic, or military effort that the United States promoted to improve its relations with Kyrgyzstan in response to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. The dependent variable, Kyrgyz vulnerability with great powers, will be measured by either increased or decreased changes in vulnerability levels. Vulnerability levels could also remain constant. Since vulnerabilities are temporal, sensitivity levels will be measured, compared, and evaluated as a potential indicator of vulnerability change.

Measuring sensitivity will be done by evaluating the Kyrgyz cost-benefit calculation when deciding on a particular relationship with great powers. Costs are best thought as costs to break the relationship. Thus, changes in Kyrgyz sensitivities to Russia and the United States will be measured by increased, decreased, or stable Kyrgyz costs, evaluated as part of a cost-benefit calculation. Evaluating multiple sensitivities will help explain changes in vulnerabilities. The cost-benefit calculation, of course, is a matter of choice by the Kyrgyz decision-maker. To measure the cost-benefit calculation by Kyrgyz decision-makers, primary and secondary sources will be reviewed and assessed. These include interviews with policy-makers in both Washington D.C. and Kyrgyzstan, as well as public interviews, news reports, and official statements by Kyrgyz officials. When particular Kyrgyz or Russian perspectives are unavailable, then the insights of both Kyrgyz and U.S. academics and policy makers are used, relying on those with a strong working knowledge of Kyrgyz affairs.

3. Small State Cost-Benefit Calculation

The balance between payoffs and costs arising from a small state's foreign policy choice is critical to our focus on Kyrgyz strategy with great powers. The primary motive for a state in its relationship with another is the potential payoff from that relationship,

especially for small states whose needs often outweigh their capabilities to fill them. Both neorealists as neoliberals agree on this point. At the most basic level, potential net benefits drive foreign policy choice (see Figure 2).

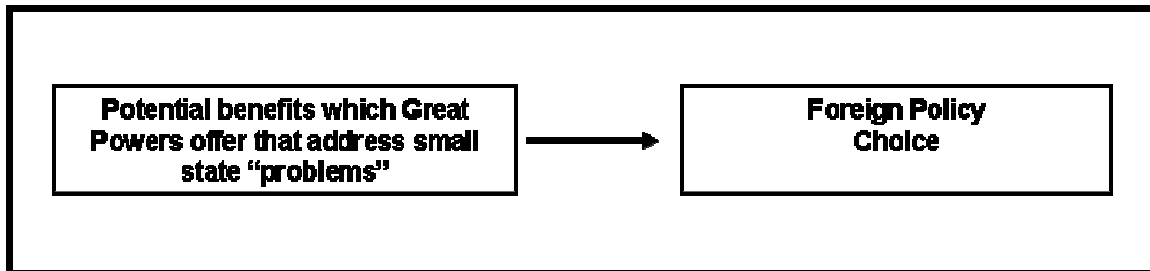


Figure 2. Small State Decision (General)

Small states can pursue multiple types of benefits (see Figure 3). Although security dilemmas are commonly used as a threshold for state needs, this study will expand potential benefits by including non-security measures.

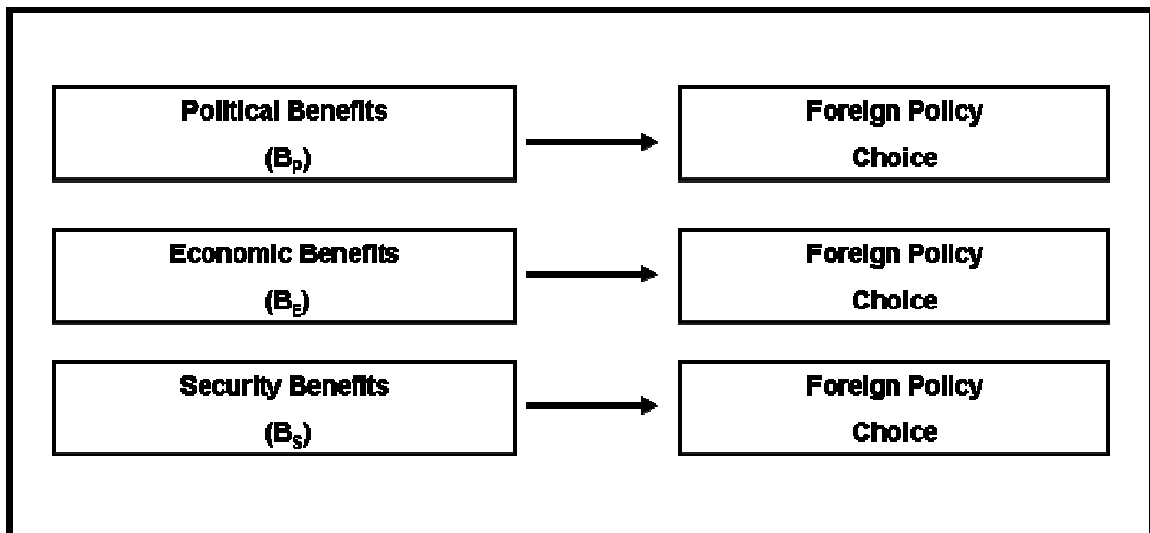


Figure 3. Individual Weak State Benefits Influencing Foreign Policy Choice

For our purposes, three benefit dimensions will be addressed to allow for the widest range of interdependence avenues between the small state and the great power. Potential benefits will be subdivided into security (internal and external), economic and political benefits.

Given that the benefits of interdependence stem from multiple dimensions, theoretically the combined dimensions will collectively make up the small state's foreign policy choice for choosing a relationship with a great power (see Figure 4).

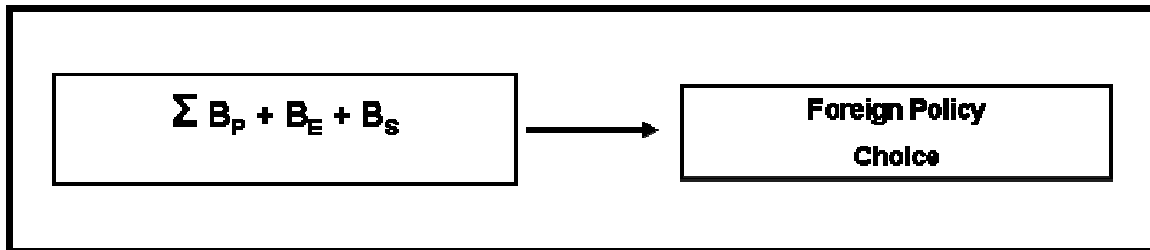


Figure 4. Summation of Small State Benefits Influencing Foreign Policy Choice

The three dimensions of benefits are unlikely to be evenly valued in the equation, and at any given time a single security, economic, or political advantage gained in an interdependent relationship can outweigh the other two dimensions' contribution. Thus, the final determination considers not only individual advantages of particular dimensions, but also their rank among one another (see Figure 5).

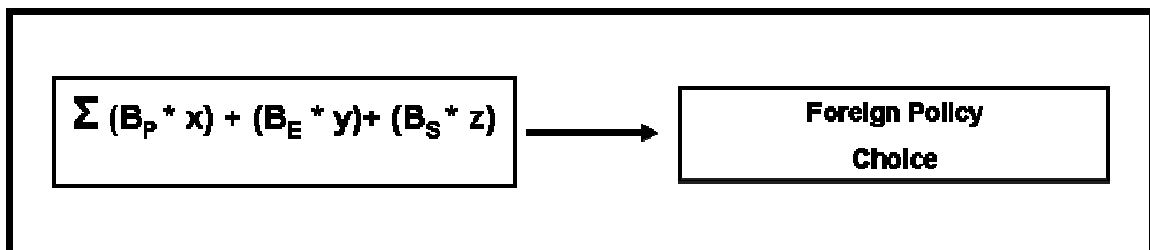


Figure 5. Summation of Small State Benefits (weighted) Influencing Foreign Policy Choice

Any interdependent relationship, by definition, comes at some cost. With small states, the expectation is that the relationship will be asymmetrical. As Keohane and Nye note, though, "...it is impossible to specify *a priori* whether the benefits of a relationship will exceed the costs."⁶⁷ Thus, costs have to be evaluated in addition to benefits. As elucidated, costs are best thought of as costs to break the relationship. These costs could include the potential termination of the benefit. For example, if great power *x* takes away a particular benefit, weak state *y* would be affected because of *z*. Additionally, costs

⁶⁷ Keohane and Nye, 9.

could include influence attempted and justified by the great power as a result of the benefit the small state receives. As with benefits, there are multiple channels of costs which small states must consider when evaluating the total negative side of a cost-benefit calculation. Also, like benefits, the costs endured from an individual dimension might be more acute than costs from other dimensions of the relationship. This evaluation will focus on security (C_S), economic (C_E), and political costs (C_P) associated with a given interdependent relationship, weighted according to their potential impact or excessive reliance (see Figure 6).

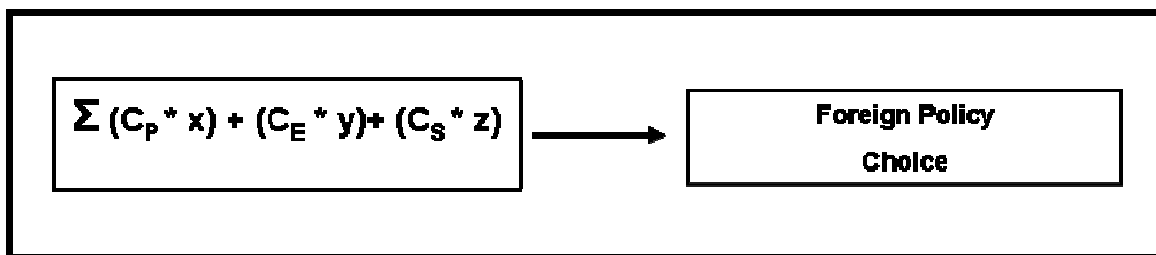


Figure 6. Summation of Small State Costs (weighted) Influencing Foreign Policy Choice

Thus, a decision by a small state to enter an interdependent relationship must weigh both the costs and the benefits prior to making a final foreign policy choice (see Figure 7). Foreign policy choices carry implications, and the critical implication for this study is that sensitivity is present in situations where the costs exceed the benefits.

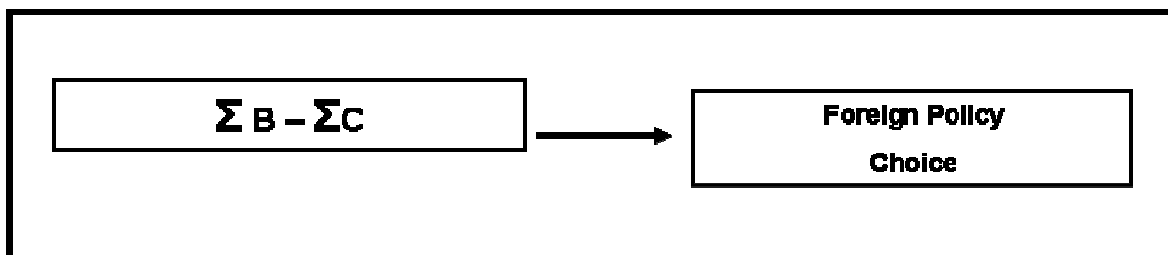


Figure 7. Total Cost-Benefit Calculation on Foreign Policy Choice

4. Data Measurement

Each case study will focus on the dimensions of interdependence in Table 1 which, when combined, will provide a broad survey of the nature of the relationship between Kyrgyzstan and the two great powers. Benefits evaluated will include those

advantages the small state gleans from an interdependent relationship with the large power. Security benefits, always problematic to define, consist of those specific advantages brought from interdependent relationships, which improve military efficacy and territorial integrity of the weak state. These will be predominantly associated with traditional “high” politics issues such as security treaties and guarantees, military equipment and training assistance, etc. Security benefits will also include support received helping the small state address internal security matters, to include terrorism, extremism, and narcotic trafficking. Economic benefits include the arrangements of an interdependent relationship, which positively advance the economic well-being of the weak state, such as foreign direct assistance, favorable tariff policies, well-developed trade arrangements, etc. Political benefits include political independence and independence in foreign and domestic policy making efforts. Other political benefits include protection against external interference in such policy making as well as public support in international forums for external and internal policies (see Table 1).

Table 1. Dimensions of Interdependence

<u>Dimension</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
Political	Domestic Politics	Support for elections, minority groups, Protection from external influence
	Foreign Policy	Support in international fora
Economic	Trade	Major trading partners, % of gross trade
	Investment	FDI, government-held securities
	Assistance	Unilateral assistance programs
Security	Security Guarantees	Treaties, bilateral agreements
	Internal Security Support	Anti-terror and counter-narcotic support
	Military Improvements	Equipment, infrastructure, training Exercises, exchanges

As for determining the costs involved, a subjective evaluation will be done at each of the two snapshots in time in the Kyrgyz relationship with the great power. Potential costs attend all the benefits associated with Kyrgyzstan’s great power relationship. The nature of the costs involved might cross dimensions (i.e. an economic cost is involved with a political benefit received), so a macro-level analysis is necessary to assess the

negative side of Kyrgyzstan's relationship with each of the great powers. If sensitivity is evident due to the costs outweighing the benefits, then the dimension or dimensions which dominate those costs will be highlighted if possible.

5. Data Assessment

For each Kyrgyz – great power relationship at each particular time, a decision will be made whether Kyrgyzstan was sensitive or not-sensitive to the great power based on the cost-benefit calculation. Given this binary measurement, each snapshot of the Kyrgyz sensitivity to each great power at both the 2001 and 2005 marks can be compared to measure a vulnerability trend in the relationship, allowing for a finite number of potential results (see Table 2). Possible outcomes for each Kyrgyz – Great Power relationship include an increase, decrease, or continuation in Kyrgyz vulnerability to the larger state. It is also possible to see a Kyrgyz non-vulnerability to a particular great power. Given both the historical roots of Kyrgyzstan's relationship with Russia as well as the depth of U.S. engagement in Central Asia after 9/11, non-vulnerable trends (within-case outcome #4) are not expected, but not discounted either. With vulnerability trends evaluated for both the Kyrgyz-Russian and Kyrgyz-U.S. relationships, the two sets of data can be compared with one another to gain a broader understanding of the intricacies of Kyrgyzstan's strategy with both states.

Table 2. Kyrgyz – Great Power Possible Outcomes

Within-Case Outcome #	2001	2005	Vulnerability Trend
1	Not Sensitive	Sensitive	Increase in Vulnerability
2	Sensitive	Not Sensitive	Decrease in Vulnerability
3	Sensitive	Sensitive	Consistent Vulnerability
4	Not Sensitive	Not Sensitive	Non-Vulnerability

Comparing vulnerability trends from one Kyrgyz- Great Power relationship to the next helps us determine what perceptions of reality Kyrgyz decision makers hold. Table 3 summarizes the list of expected outcomes. Outcome #1 would be Kyrgyzstan's weakest position, showing how the small state continues to be vulnerable to both the United States and Russia. Realist explanations would suggest how a marginalized Kyrgyzstan views its position, knowing it is completely at the whim of the great powers and unable to change the situation. Outcome #2 and outcome #4 are also outcomes indicating a realist world and indicate a cautious Kyrgyz hedge betting strategy favoring either the United States (outcome #2) or Russia (outcome #4). Outcome 4, for example, indicates a Kyrgyz opportunistic strategy. It accepts certain costs in order to reap benefits through increased U.S. engagement, but sustains Russian ties because of doubts of long-term U.S. commitment.

Table 3. Possible Outcomes of Vulnerability Trends in a Cross-Case Comparison

Cross-Case Outcome Number	Kyrgyzstan and the USA	Kyrgyzstan and Russia	Nature of Relationship	Expected Kyrgyz Behavior or Outcome
1	Consistent	Consistent	Realist	Weakest position: unable to change position with either state
2	Consistent	Increase	Realist	Cautious Hedge Betting; Sustain U.S. ties while increasing Russian engagement
3	Consistent	Decrease	CI	Decrease its vulnerability with Russia through CI strategies
4	Increase	Consistent	Realist	Cautious Hedge Betting; Sustain Russian ties while increasing U.S. engagement
5	Increase	Increase	Realist	Risky Hedge Betting
6	Increase	Decrease	Realist	Bandwagon with the United States
7	Decrease	Consistent	CI	Decrease its vulnerability with the United States through CI strategies
8	Decrease	Increase	Realist	Bandwagon with Russia
9	Decrease	Decrease	CI	Optimal CI: Uses position with both states to decrease total vulnerabilities

The most perilous realist outcome for Kyrgyzstan is outcome #5, showing that despite an increased vulnerability to the United States since 9/11 Kyrgyz inclinations are to simultaneously reinforce ties with Russia. Kyrgyzstan, previously considered non-vulnerable to Russia and the United States, voluntarily throws its allegiance to both great

powers. Kyrgyzstan recognizes that its vulnerability to the United States had rapidly become deep and risky. To mitigate this risk, Kyrgyzstan then also increases its vulnerability with Russia in order to have another security outlet.

Outcomes #6 and #8 are the final realist models. These outcomes show a major reverse in vulnerabilities from 2001 to 2005 from one great power to the next. Realist explanations suggest bandwagoning behavior, especially for outcome #6 where a significant increase in U.S. engagement post-9/11 would provide Kyrgyzstan a new bandwagon outcome.

Outcomes #3 and #7 are complex interdependent outcomes, highlighting Kyrgyzstan's capacity to decrease vulnerability with one power without having to increase its vulnerability with the next. This suggests Kyrgyzstan is using strategies to advance its position and lower the costs with one of the powers. In turn, outcome #9 would be the optimal complex interdependent explanation where the increased U.S. engagement opened up opportunities to decrease its vulnerability with both the United States and Russia. Other sources of Kyrgyz vulnerability such as its relationship with China would need to be explored to verify this outcome.

Outcomes #7, #8, and #9 are not anticipated outcomes. As stated, given the breadth and depth of U.S. engagement in Central Asia generically and Kyrgyzstan specifically since launching the War on Terror, it is not expected that vulnerabilities will decrease with the United States. The most conservative outcome anticipated would be a consistency in vulnerability.

Once all the data is compiled and assessed, a decision reflecting Kyrgyz vulnerability shifts will be made. From this point, an evaluation of Kyrgyz foreign policy behavior will follow. Specific trends in policy behavior will be collected, if possible, and used to make a broader assessment of Kyrgyz foreign policy strategies. In turn, the implications for U.S. engagements strategies and appropriate policy recommendations will be presented given the findings of the study. The way forward begins with collecting the appropriate data on Kyrgyzstan's relationship with the United States and Russia.

III. KYRGYZSTAN AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A. THE KYRGYZ-U.S. RELATIONSHIP, JANUARY 2001

1. U.S. Interest in Kyrgyzstan, 2001

Oliver Roy, one of the world's premier scholars on Central Asia, commented that "there is no great interest in [Kyrgyzstan] since it lacks natural resources."⁶⁸ Kyrgyzstan, though, was not ignored by either the world or the United States for both investment and engagement in the years following its independence. World-wide involvement in Kyrgyz development came from multiple sources, including Japan, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank. The United States, for its part, pursued a methodical, multi-faceted approach to Kyrgyzstan. This engagement was modest in relation to overall U.S. foreign policy efforts and often fell under the guise of collective Central Asian diplomacy rather than specific U.S.-Kyrgyz bilateral measures.

The U.S. engagement strategy toward Kyrgyzstan at the beginning of 2001 closely mirrored the broad objectives of the U.S. National Security Strategy as presented by President Bill Clinton at the end of his second term. The U.S. security approach centered around three principal goals: enhancing security at home and abroad, promoting prosperity, and promoting democracy and human rights.⁶⁹ The U.S. strategy set tasks in Central Asia of democracy and free market promotion, access to Caspian energy resources, and nonproliferation. These often did not complement one another. In fact, they often clashed.

Several observers noted the Janus-faced nature of the U.S. engagement policy toward Central Asia at the turn of the century. If the United States needed to associate with authoritarian or repressive regimes for the sake of larger energy policies, it would.⁷⁰ The engagement programs with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan often revolved around energy access rather than democratic transition and open markets. It is

⁶⁸ Oliver Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 192.

⁶⁹ U.S. President, *A National Security Strategy for a Global Age*, The White House, December 2000, Section I.

⁷⁰ Stephen Blank, "The United States and Central Asia," in *Central Asia: The New International Context*, Roy Allison and Lena Jonson ed. (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 134.

not that the United States still did not pursue democratic and free market goals. Rather, its efforts often produced lackluster results as the Central Asian nations understood that the United States valued energy access over democracy. When energy policies are less emphasized, democracy promotion would be more sacrosanct and advance to the forefront of U.S. policy.⁷¹ Even then, U.S. policy was more regionally-based than nation-based, as the U.S. approach to Kyrgyzstan would show.

Kyrgyzstan's place in the greater U.S. foreign policy toward Central Asia was based more on democracy promotion and market reform rather than energy. Since it did not possess the same raw material reserves like Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan was forced to pursue other approaches to development in the post-independence years. Kyrgyzstan's early democracy and market reform efforts helped propel its reputation above its Central Asian neighbors. Common language in U.S. government statements and publications labels Kyrgyzstan as the "most open, progressive, and cooperative" nation in Central Asia.⁷² Unsurprisingly, when U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Bishkek in April 2000, she heavily emphasized that "the best guarantee of Kyrgyzstan's security is democracy," consistently highlighting irregularities in Kyrgyz elections and violations of human rights norms.⁷³

The United States did have specific security concerns germane to Kyrgyzstan. Anne Sigmund, the former U.S. Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, stated that the country is important security-wise since "its location [sits] astride a strategic arc of instability along which East and West have historically clashed."⁷⁴ Thus, U.S. security interests in

⁷¹ Blank, 134.

⁷² U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), "USAID 2004 Congressional Budget Justification: Europe and Eurasia – Kyrgyzstan," 28 February 2003. Available online at http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2004/europe_eurasia/Kyrgyzstan.pdf Last accessed June 2005.

⁷³ Madeleine K. Albright, Statement at Press Availability Conference at the Pinara Hotel, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 16 April 2000. As released by the Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State. Available online at <http://secretary.state.gov/www/statements/2000/000416b.html>. Last accessed 6 May 2005.

⁷⁴ U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Regional Mission for Central Asia, "USAID Assistance Strategy for Central Asia 2001-2005," July 2000. Available online at http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/car/PDABS400.pdf Last accessed June 2005.

Kyrgyzstan at the turn of the century focused on border security, regional security, and peacekeeping while still focusing on democracy promotion as the long-term solution to prevent radical and extremist organizations from overwhelming the country.⁷⁵

2. Kyrgyz Political Benefits from U.S. Engagement, 2001

President Askar Akayev's early flirtations with Western norms as well as his open personality helped him secure many political benefits from the United States in the years after independence. President Akayev's handling of the August 1991 crisis and his willingness to oppose the military coup in the Soviet Union impressed many Western observers, earning him great credibility in diplomatic circles. Additionally, his enthusiasm for market reform, democratic liberalization, and religious tolerance made him a leader in Central Asia, which the West was equally enthusiastic about supporting. This enthusiasm helped make Kyrgyzstan a "laboratory" for democratic principles and market reform in Central Asia.⁷⁶ Secretary of State James Baker noted upon meeting President Akayev in Bishkek that "in a region more prone to warlords than Jeffersonian democrats, Akayev was an anomaly who genuinely believed in democracy and free markets."⁷⁷

In addition to quickly establishing formal diplomatic relations with the United States in 1991 shortly after independence, Kyrgyzstan also secured a sustained U.S. engagement strategy in the country when the U.S. Congress passed the Freedom Support Act of 1992. Although not solely directed at Kyrgyzstan, this legislation formalized the broad policy approach for U.S. engagement in Central Asia, emphasizing the necessity of democracy and market economies for Central Asian development.⁷⁸ Later in the decade, the U.S. Congress reemphasized the strategic importance of the region with the passing of the Silk Road Strategy Act in 1999, amending the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to include Central Asian stipulations. This legislation included specific provisions for

⁷⁵ U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with the New Independent States of the Former Soviet Union: FY 2000 Annual Report," January 2001.

⁷⁶ U.S. Government Accounting Office, "U.S. Economic and Democratic Assistance to the Central Asian Republics," Washington, D.C., August 1999, 14. Available online at <http://www.gao.gov/archive/1999/ns99200.pdf> Last accessed March 2005.

⁷⁷ James A. Baker III, *The Politics of Diplomacy* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 578.

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Wishnick, *Growing U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2002), 3.

border control improvement in Central Asia to mitigate trans-national threats like WMD and narcotics trafficking.⁷⁹ Additionally, this act included for the first time specific anti-terrorism measures focused on Central Asia. All these measures provided Kyrgyzstan with tangible assistance in economic and security dimensions, but also provided a certain degree of legitimacy to the Kyrgyz leadership as a result of its dealings with the United States. Kyrgyzstan, in turn, used its new relationship with the United States to leverage U.S. leadership in Kyrgyz efforts in other fora.

For example, Kyrgyzstan's World Trade Organization (WTO) accession in December 1998 would have been more problematic without U.S. technical and political support. The United States, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other programs, assisted Kyrgyzstan with WTO accession by assisting the development of private sector and public support for membership, by reviewing trade patterns, by assisting in the creation of new trade laws, by improving institutional structures aiding WTO negotiations, and by providing advice on trade strategies.⁸⁰ The United States assisted Kyrgyzstan, along with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, by training "more than 1500 government officials, judges, journalists, businesspersons, and lawyers in WTO-related policy and legal issues."⁸¹ The Kyrgyz leadership was acutely aware of the benefits gained from U.S. leadership. Kyrgyz Ambassador to the United States Baktybek Abdrysaev praised U.S. support, touting that economic developments made in the country's first ten years were due "to invaluable assistance from the United States," specifically lauding USAID's contributions to Kyrgyzstan's business and entrepreneur sector development.⁸²

⁷⁹ Wishnick, 5.

⁸⁰ World Trade Organization (WTO), "Technical Cooperation Guide: The United States of America/USAID," Online at http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/teccop_e/bil_ass_e/usa_e.htm Last accessed 8 May 2005.

⁸¹ Ibid. Only Kyrgyzstan, though, has formally acceded to the WTO of the four nations.

⁸² Baktybek Abdrysaev, "U.S.-Kyrgyz Strategic Cooperation in the War on Terrorism," The Heritage Foundation Heritage Lectures Series, No. 760, 29 August 2002, Washington D.C. Available online at www.heritage.org/library/lecture/hl760.html

3. Kyrgyz Economic Benefits from U.S. Engagement, 2001

a. *Kyrgyz Trade with the United States, 2001*

2000 was a good year for Kyrgyz trade relations with the United States, although structural improvement and not trade performance drove this optimism. Kyrgyzstan was the first NIS to “graduate” from provisions delineated in the Jackson-Vanik amendment in Title IV of the Trade Act of 1974, relieving U.S. trade with Kyrgyzstan being subjected to presidential reports and waivers concerning human rights and emigration issues.⁸³ Nonetheless, the overall trade levels between the two countries remained quite modest. In 2000, Kyrgyzstan only exported U.S. \$2.9 million of goods to the United States, representing only 0.5% of their total exports for the year (see Table 4).⁸⁴ Primary exports to the United States included antimony, mercury, and other rare-earth metals as well as chemical products.⁸⁵

Table 4. Kyrgyz Exports and Imports with the United States, 1997-2000 (From: International Monetary Fund)

Year	1997	1998	1999	2000
Amount of Kyrgyz exports to the USA (U.S. \$)	18.19	7.6	11.3	2.9
% of total Kyrgyz worldwide exports	3%	1.5%	2.5%	0.5%
Amount of Kyrgyz imports from the USA (U.S. \$)	39.67	40.8	54.3	53.8
% of total Kyrgyz worldwide imports	5.6%	4.9 %	9.0%	9.7%

Kyrgyz imports for 2000 from the United States totaled U.S. \$53.8 million, representing 9.7% of their total imports (see Table 4).⁸⁶ American imported products included foodstuffs like grain, rice and meat, as well as machinery, agricultural equipment, medicine, and medical equipment.⁸⁷

⁸³ Jim Nichol, “Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests,” CRS Issue Brief for Congress IB93108, 18 February 2005, 13.

⁸⁴ IMF, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook*, 290.

⁸⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Background Notes: Kyrgyzstan,” October 2001.

⁸⁶ IMF, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook*, 290.

⁸⁷ U.S. Department of State, “Background Notes: Kyrgyzstan,” October 2001.

b. U.S. Investment in Kyrgyzstan, 2001

By the beginning of 2001, foreign direct investment (FDI) originating from the United States had fallen dramatically. FDI flows from the United States for 2000 were U.S. \$1.8 million, down from the peak of U.S. \$25.5 million in 1998 (see Table 5).⁸⁸ This could be attributed to investor reluctance following the 1998 collapse of the ruble and the economic fallout in most former Soviet economies. The United States was the eighth largest FDI originator in Kyrgyzstan in 2000, with the Netherlands (U.S. \$9.2 million) and Germany (U.S. \$8.2) investing the most.

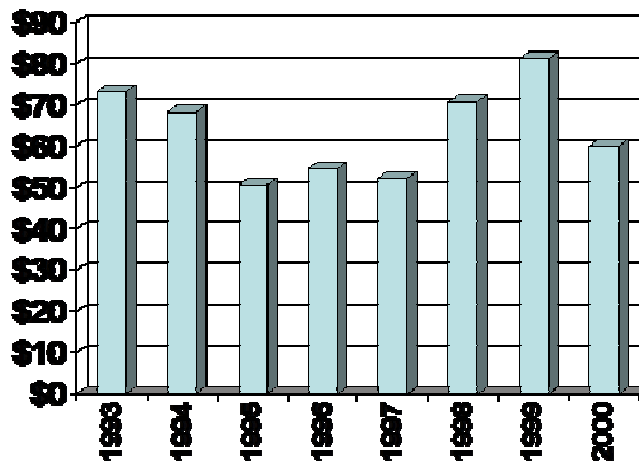
Table 5. Foreign Direct Investment from the United States into Kyrgyzstan, 1996-2000 (From: Source: The United Nations; a - data unavailable)

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Amount of Kyrgyz FDI from the USA (U.S. \$)	4.4	6.0	25.5	7.0	1.8
% of total Kyrgyz worldwide FDI	9.3%	7.2%	23.3%	15.8%	*a

c. U.S. Assistance to Kyrgyzstan, 2001

While specific U.S. trade and investment rates continued to be marginally beneficial to Kyrgyzstan, U.S. governmental assistance continued to be a major contributor to the sustainment of the Kyrgyz economy. 2000 was another consistently strong year of U.S. grants to Kyrgyzstan, covering a broad spectrum of areas. The U.S. government allocated U.S. \$60.1 million to Kyrgyzstan in 2000, making the combined amount of aid from 1993-2000 U.S. \$511.2 million at an annual average of \$63.9 million. These figures include both economic and security assistance, taken from multiple governmental sources such as FREEDOM Support Act, Department of State, Department of Defense, and Department of Energy (see Figure 8).

⁸⁸United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), "UNCTAD Country Profile: Kyrgyzstan," Online at <http://www.unctad.org/Templates/Page.asp?intItemID=3198&lang=1&print=1> Last accessed June 2005.



Amounts are millions of U.S. dollars

Source: U.S. Department of State

Figure 8. U.S. Assistance to Kyrgyzstan, 1993-2000

Of the five Central Asian newly independent states, Kyrgyzstan received the highest amount per capita for assistance distributed by USAID, which targets democratic, developmental, and market reforms. This reflects strongly the U.S. government's willingness to promote the advancement of democracy and market reform in Kyrgyzstan so it could be a model for the other nations in the region (see Figure 9).

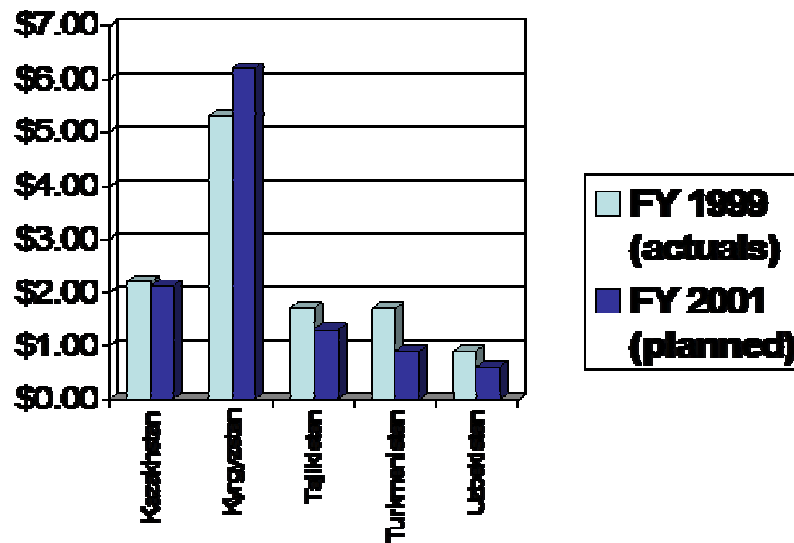
4. Kyrgyz Security Benefits from U.S. Engagement, 2001

a. Security Guarantees, 2001

Although no formal security treaties or agreements were signed between Kyrgyzstan and the United States in the first ten years after Kyrgyzstan's independence, the United States did adjust its worldview on the importance of Central Asia in a globalized and volatile world. Kyrgyzstan would benefit from this shift. For example, U.S. Central Command assumed the geographical responsibility of the five Central Asian former Soviet republics, including Kyrgyzstan.⁸⁹ This shift emphasized the "greater Middle East" role of Central Asia, but also potentially placed the area in a position of third priority behind Middle East energy concerns and the security situation in the Levant.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, "Unified Command Plan Changes Announced," Defense Link Press Release 085-98, 25 February 1998, Online at http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/1998/b02251998_bt085-98.html Last accessed 6 May 2005.

⁹⁰ Blank, "The United States and Central Asia," 141.



Amounts are USAID Assistance number "per capita"
 From: "USAID Assistance Strategy for Central Asia 2001-2005"

Figure 9. USAID Assistance to the Central Asian Republics, per Capita

Kyrgyzstan received a moral boost of support when the U.S. State Department designated the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) "Foreign Terrorist Organization" on 15 September 2000. Although this would not have a tangible impact on Kyrgyzstan's struggle with extremism and terrorism, it did allow Kyrgyzstan to reap benefits from U.S. governmental efforts such as blocking asset transactions and intelligence gathering.⁹¹

U.S. assistance strategies were often tailored to help address some of Kyrgyzstan's internal security challenges, focusing on community and individual level programs rather than larger governmental-focused projects.⁹² USAID specifically targeted Kyrgyzstan's vulnerable south with emphasis on individual and community development through land privatization and small business development.⁹³ Southern Kyrgyzstan is the nation's poorest and least developed area, contributing to its reputation

⁹¹ U.S. Department of State, "Intent to Designate as Foreign Terrorist Organization the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," U.S. Department of State press statement, 15 September 2000.

⁹² USAID, "USAID's Assistance Strategy for Central Asia, 2001-2005," 25-26.

⁹³ USAID, "USAID's Assistance Strategy for Central Asia, 2001-2005," 25-26.

as breeding grounds for extremist movements. U.S. assistance thus helped Kyrgyzstan counter the growing influence of radical and extremist groups such as the IMU in the vulnerable south.

b. Military Benefits, 2001

Although military-to-military interaction was not as highly prioritized in the 1990's as other DOD programs in the NIS such as Cooperative Threat Reduction, enough efforts were undertaken to lay down the foundation for a future working relationship. To begin with, Kyrgyzstan was the first Central Asian state to join NATO's newly established Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1994, and was considered an "enthusiastic, if not highly visible" member of the organization.⁹⁴ Under the aegis of PfP, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan created the first regional peacekeeping unit, the Central Asian Battalion (CENTRASBAT). Through this arrangement, Kyrgyzstan participated in several regional exercises.⁹⁵ One of the first U.S. bilateral efforts to interact with the Kyrgyz military was through CENTRASBAT. The United States sponsored annual exercises with the CENTRASBAT from 1996 to 2001. The U.S. forces operated alongside those of the CENTRASBAT unit as well as other participants, mentoring Central Asian forces on NATO-style combat and peacekeeping operations.⁹⁶ These exercises in the "spirit of Partnership for Peace" were critical for the Kyrgyz military's awareness of western military norms and procedures.

Another unique opportunity for the Kyrgyz military under the sponsorship of PfP was the State Partnership Program. This NATO initiative administered under the U.S. National Guard Bureau established permanent exchange relationships between the Kyrgyz military and the Montana National Guard. Montana was chosen as the exchange state for Kyrgyzstan due to the similarity of terrain between the two regions. This program sought to increase bilateral relations between Kyrgyzstan and the United States through a working relationship across a spectrum of military-related activities. Examples include disaster and emergency service exercises, infantry exchanges, cadet programs,

⁹⁴ O'Malley and McDermott, "Kyrgyzstan's Security tightrope: Balancing its relations with Moscow and Washington."

⁹⁵ O'Malley and McDermott.

⁹⁶ Globalsecurity, "CENTRASBAT" Available online at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/centrasbat.htm> Last accessed 6 May 2005.

and law enforcement assistance. Through this partnership, Kyrgyzstan was exposed to a multitude of U.S. programs emphasizing how the military is integrated into civilian-controlled armed forces.⁹⁷

Additionally, CENTCOM conducted bilateral training activities involving U.S. Special Forces (SF). These SF teams trained for one month periods in Kyrgyzstan, focusing on small team formation tactics designed against terrorists and insurgents.⁹⁸ Although not grand in scope, these exchanges also paved the way for future military cooperation efforts. CENTCOM also expanded International Military Education and Training opportunities for Kyrgyzstan. Finally, pre-2001 diplomatic efforts culminated with Secretary of State Madeline Albright announcement in April 2000 of the Central Asian Border Security Initiative (CASI), allocating \$3 million to each Central Asian state specifically to address limitations of each nation's border control measures.⁹⁹

5. Costs of Kyrgyz Engagement with the United States, 2001

The evidence evaluated suggests that Kyrgyz benefits received from several of the dimensions from the United States did not significantly alter or improve Kyrgyzstan's position within that dimension. Economically, both trade and investment were relatively marginal between Kyrgyzstan and the United States. Although Kyrgyzstan imported a moderate amount of goods from the United States, the types of goods imported could potentially have been bought from other Western nations. Investment by U.S. companies is still hampered by high levels of corruption and the lingering impact of the 1998 financial crisis.

As far as security is concerned, there is no evidence suggesting that the assistance given in either security guarantees or military-to-military engagement significantly improved the Kyrgyz security dilemma. The military equipment donated to Kyrgyzstan through assistance programs was non-lethal, and did not necessarily improve Kyrgyzstan's capacity to protect its borders or repel insurgents. Kyrgyzstan endured a series of raids by IMU insurgents in the late summer of 2000. Although the Kyrgyz

⁹⁷ For an overview of the Montana National Guard State Sponsorship Program, see their presentation at http://www.montanaguard.com/SPP/MT%20SPP%2021Feb03a_files/frame.htm Last accessed June 2005.

⁹⁸ O'Malley and McDermott.

⁹⁹ Wishnik, 5.

security forces performed better than the previous year, the fact that the insurgents could easily penetrate southern Kyrgyzstan showed just how neglected Kyrgyz security forces were at the turn of the century. The designation of the IMU as a terrorist organization by the United States did not influence the outcome of the insurgency, and no U.S. military or other security efforts directly assisted Kyrgyzstan in its fight. The education of Kyrgyz military officers through IMET funds or PfP/Marshall Center programs is significant, but its full impact is not being felt at the beginning of 2001. In the end, only the large sums of U.S. assistance directed at democratic and economic reforms had the potential to influence Kyrgyzstan's development significantly.

U.S. engagement strategies were unable to influence outcomes and elite perceptions in Kyrgyzstan. As identified by the FREEDOM Support Act and its modification of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, the President must "take into account not only [the] relative need but also the extent to which that independent state is acting to..." the spirit and intent of the assistance given.¹⁰⁰ The President could subjectively determine if Kyrgyzstan is or is not fulfilling its obligations in pursuit of democratic reform, free and fair elections, and the rights of the individuals. The State Department's FY2000 report on assistance to the NIS highlights substantial irregularities in Kyrgyzstan's commitment to the principles mandated by U.S. assistance. As it turned out, 2000 was a very bad year in Kyrgyzstan on all the goals addressed by U.S. aid.

Both the 2000 Kyrgyz parliamentary and presidential elections were marred by serious flaws and irregularities, giving further evidence to observers that Kyrgyzstan was walking away from its earlier attempts to transition to a democracy. Much of the election manipulation was done by structures President Akayev created to assist his hold on power, such as the Central Election Committee.

The first Central Election Committee (CEC) was established in 1994 in anticipation of the 1995 parliamentary elections. Although the CEC was constitutionally supposed to be created by the legislature, Akayev formed the committee himself and

¹⁰⁰ For example, see U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Assistance to and Cooperative Efforts with the New Independent States of the Former Soviet Union: FY2000," January 2001, 344. Available online at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/2377.pdf> Last accessed June 2005.

stacked it in his favor.¹⁰¹ Out of the 15 committee members, only three were from political parties while the rest were from the government as appointed by Akayev. Government marginalization of the opposition increased in 2000 elections. The CEC created new “rules” specifically designed to weed out candidates. These rules include eliminating candidates for failing to declare property, for having a minor criminal record, or for failing the Kyrgyz language test.¹⁰² The most serious method of opposition elimination, however, was Akayev’s decision to put his major political opponent behind bars before the election.

Feliks Kulov was the first presidential candidate to have both the credibility and the personality to challenge Akayev in a free and fair election. After leaving his post as vice president, Kulov filled several other key positions in government such as Minister of National Security and Mayor of Bishkek. After publicly disagreeing with several of Akayev’s policies in 1999, Kulov resigned from his mayoral position and established the Ar-Namys opposition party with the goal of defeating Akayev in the October 2000 presidential elections. Within weeks of declaring his candidacy Kulov was arrested on charges that he had abused power while Minister of National Security from 1997-98. After five months in jail, Kulov was tried in a military tribunal and acquitted of all charges. A presiding judge quickly annulled Kulov’s acquittal and sentenced him to seven years in prison. This was a very high profile case in Kyrgyzstan, and Amnesty International considered Kulov to Kyrgyzstan’s most vivid example of a political prisoner.¹⁰³

The parliamentary elections of 2000 also saw vast governmental interference in the election process. As in the presidential elections, the CEC was at the center of the controversy. President Akayev pushed through an election reform law in 1999 to

¹⁰¹ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), “The Parliamentary Election in Kyrgyzstan: February 5, 1995. Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 2000, 6.

¹⁰² Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2001: Civil Society, Democracy, and Markets in East Central Europe and the Newly Independent States*, 223-224. Available online at http://www.freedomhouse.org/pdf_docs/research/nitransit/2001/00_report.pdf Last accessed June 2005.

¹⁰³ U.S. Congress – Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Human Rights and Democracy in Kyrgyzstan: Hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, 107th Cong., 1st Sess., 12 December 2001, 2.

eliminate “inconvenient politicians from the race.”¹⁰⁴ This law legalized a mandatory one-year registration deadline for parliamentary elections. With the law passed in April 1999 and the parliamentary elections being held in February 2000, any candidate not registered at the time of the law passage was ineligible for the elections. This included Kulov’s party, which was seen as the major contender to Akayev’s entrenched establishment.

President Akayev was able to consolidate power in Kyrgyzstan in spite of eight years of assistance coming from the United States for election reform and democracy. The outcomes of these elections severely disturbed the U.S. leadership in Kyrgyzstan. Then Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan John O’Keefe related that he wanted to punish Akayev for the poor democratic showing in both elections during 2000 through the removal of specific assistance programs. But when he looked at the numbers, very little of U.S. assistance by late 2000 was going to the government. Most of the assistance funds were targeted to “bottom-up” programs, which were genuinely aiding Kyrgyz society.¹⁰⁵ Without this economic stick, the Ambassador had little capability to punish President Akayev for his actions.

6. Assessment of the Kyrgyz-U.S. Relationship, 2001

Overall, the pre-9/11 sensitivity assessment of Kyrgyzstan’s relationship with the United States is rated as “not sensitive.” Although certain dimensions appear to be beneficial, Kyrgyzstan’s overall position in the international order would not be significantly affected by the removal of U.S. engagement. Additionally, the dimensions of U.S. engagement which penetrate deepest into Kyrgyz society did not significantly compel the Kyrgyz leadership in any tangible way to accede to U.S. influence.

B. THE KYRGYZ-U.S. RELATIONSHIP, MAY 2005

1. U.S. Interest in Kyrgyzstan, 2005

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington changed many U.S. perceptions and priorities, including its engagement strategy for Central Asia. Operation Enduring Freedom and the continual presence of U.S. and NATO forces in

¹⁰⁴ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), “Report on the Parliamentary Elections in Kyrgyzstan: February-March 2000., Washington D.C., 2000, 4.

¹⁰⁵ Author’s interview with former U.S. Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan John O’Keefe, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 3 June 2005.

Afghanistan compelled the United States to forge deeper relationships with the Central Asian Republics. The post-9/11 U.S. vision for Central Asian engagement, including Kyrgyzstan, falls in line with the ongoing themes presented in the Bush administration's first post-9/11 National Security Strategy.

The September 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) marks a definitive change in tone from the previous strategies issued from President Clinton. The new NSS clearly indicates that the United States considers itself at war. To execute the Global War on Terrorism, the Bush administration introduced new approaches and strategies in order to provide an expanded range of options to defeat the global terrorist threat. While the most controversial element has been its emphasis on preemption, President Bush's NSS also focuses on core beliefs in the right of liberty and justice for all people, keeping individual freedom and democratic institutions as principle themes.¹⁰⁶ The strategy continues to emphasize the promotion of democracy through foreign aid for those who support it in non-violent ways, and promises to support and reward those nations who make positive steps away from authoritarian regimes.¹⁰⁷ The 2002 National Security Strategy identified the need to support the "independence and stability of the states of the former Soviet Union" in order to promote regional stability and contribute to Russia's integration into the Western world.¹⁰⁸ Despite its strong anti-terror focus, it lacks specific measures concerning strategy formulation for Central Asia. Rather, it delegates that task to other documents like the National Defense Strategy.

The 2005 U.S. National Defense Strategy helps translate the Bush administrations strategic goals into actual policies for Central Asia. One of the principal necessities of the defense strategy is the need to secure strategic access in order to maintain freedom of movement to conduct of the Global War on Terrorism.¹⁰⁹ This includes enabling access to critical regions, lines of communication, and global commons.¹¹⁰ The National

¹⁰⁶ U.S. President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (The White House, September 2002), 3-4. Available online at www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf Last accessed 29 April 2005.

¹⁰⁷ NSS 2002, 4.

¹⁰⁸ NSS 2002, 27.

¹⁰⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, March 2005, iv.

¹¹⁰ NDS, 6.

Defense Strategy justifies global access as a means to promote security and prosperity of the United States, to ensure freedom of action, to help secure critical partnerships in the war on terror, and to help protect the integrity of the global economic system. Global access is also an enabler of the preemption strategy articulated in the NSS.

A. Elizabeth Jones, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, noted that the United States is

linked with [Central Asia] in ways we could have never imagined before September 11. Our policy in Central Asia must include a commitment to deeper, more sustained, and better coordinated engagement on the full range of issues upon which we agree and disagree.¹¹¹

The U.S. State Department identifies “promoting regional stability, development of democratic, market-based systems, and combating terrorism and narcotic smuggling” as its strategic goals in Central Asia.¹¹²

Central Asia is far from ignored by the U.S leadership. President Bush welcomed President Akayev to the White House in September 2002, and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld visited the region annually from 2001-2003 as well as to Kyrgyzstan in April 2005. The United States calls Kyrgyzstan a “dependable and outspoken ally in the Global War on Terrorism,” emphasizing the country’s contributions to the anti-terror campaign while downplaying its regression concerning democratic reform.¹¹³ While it is true U.S. engagement strategies still use the full spectrum of assistance, it is the general perception that security assistance has priority over normative issues since 9/11.¹¹⁴ The most quantifiable manifestation of U.S. interest in Kyrgyzstan is the stationing of U.S. and NATO forces at its airfield in Manas.

¹¹¹ O’Malley and McDermott.

¹¹² U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia: FY 2003 Annual Report. Section II: Country Assessments and Performance Measures – Kyrgyz Republic,” January 2004. Available online at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rpt/37659.htm> Last accessed June 2005.

¹¹³ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports on Terrorism,” Chapter 5. 27 April 2005. Available online at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/45425.htm> Last accessed June 2005.

¹¹⁴ S. Neal McFarlane, “The United States and Regionalism in Central Asia,” *International Affairs* 80, 3 (May 2004): 456.

The U.S. Air Force-operated Peter J. Ganci Airbase in Manas, Kyrgyzstan is a critical node for the operations in Afghanistan. The airfield, named after a New York City firefighter who perished during the 9/11 attacks, is the strategic hub for all forces entering the Central Asian theater from northern approaches. With its 13,000 foot runway, the airfield supports the heaviest of Western airlift bringing in supplies and troops to Central Asia. Additionally, the airfield has based both combat aircraft and aerial tankers supporting Operation Enduring Freedom activities.

The U.S. Defense Department is also considering Manas as a potential forward operating site (FOS) or cooperative security location (CSL) as part of its global posture review, maintaining access to the facility for training or rapid-reaction operations.¹¹⁵ While not as close to Afghanistan as the US Air Force's other Central Asian main operating base, Karshi-Kalinabad Air Base, Uzbekistan, it has other benefits.

In the initial airbase negotiations in Central Asia, Uzbekistan allegedly intended to restrict the amount and type of flights departing from its airfields. Kyrgyzstan's offer of Manas came without restrictions and provided a redundant access point in the region.¹¹⁶ Additionally, critics of U.S. engagement strategies with Central Asian dictatorships focus less on the U.S.-Kyrgyz relationship than on U.S. cooperation with Uzbekistan's repressive President Islam Karimov. Uzbekistan's reluctance to improve its record on human rights resulted in suspension by the U.S. State Department of military assistance funds in 2004.¹¹⁷ Finally, President Karimov's willingness to brutally crush an uprising in May 2005 makes Kyrgyzstan's March 2005 revolution seem tame. Even after the fall of its government, Kyrgyzstan is a more politically stable partner in Central Asia.

Despite its emphasis on counter-terrorism, the United States did not abandon its hopes for democracy and market reform in Kyrgyzstan. The State Department considers Kyrgyzstan "the most open [and] free society in Central Asia and the one most likely to

¹¹⁵ Jim Nichol, "Kyrgyzstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests," CRS Report for Congress 97-690, 26 May 2004, 3. See U.S. Department of Defense, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, March 2005, 19, for a description of the DoD's vision of these type of sites.

¹¹⁶ Nichol, "Kyrgyzstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests," 2.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

achieve sustainable reforms.”¹¹⁸ U.S. Ambassador Stephen Young described Kyrgyzstan as the “leader in the development of democracy in Central Asia.”¹¹⁹ U.S. assistance funds continued to prioritize democratic and economic reforms alongside increases in security assistance. Kyrgyzstan, in turn, continued to benefit from these programs.

2. Kyrgyz Political Benefits from U.S. Engagement, 2005

President Akayev’s methodical decision to allow U.S. and NATO forces to operate from Kyrgyzstan was, to a certain degree, politically motivated. As will be discussed, Akayev was to benefit from the merging of U.S. and Kyrgyz security interests concerning the Taliban and the IMU. But Akayev and the Kyrgyz people were genuinely sympathetic to the United States after the 9/11 attacks, and Kyrgyzstan’s decision to offer an airbase represented what it was capable of contributing to the Coalition effort.¹²⁰

When President Bush linked the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan with al-Qaeda during his address to Congress after the 9/11 attacks, a clear alignment of threat perceptions occurred between the United States and Kyrgyzstan.¹²¹ The Kyrgyz leadership received instant legitimacy in its fight against terrorism, and this legitimacy helped convince President Akayev to join the U.S.-led “coalition of the willing.” Although Kyrgyz forces did not actively participate in operations in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan’s internal stability situation improved nonetheless. Coalition forces inflicted heavy losses on IMU ranks that were in Afghanistan supporting the Taliban, and the threat of IMU incursions from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on the scale of 1999-2000 substantially decreased.

The role of emphasizing and focusing on the threat of terrorism has benefited both the Akayev regime and those politicians vying for the July 2005 Presidential election.

¹¹⁸ U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia: FY 2003 Annual Report. Section II: Country Assessments and Performance Measures – Kyrgyz Republic,” January 2004.

¹¹⁹ Stephen Young, “Ambassador Stephen Young’s Interview to Radio Azattyk and Radio BBC Kyrgyz,” 18 February 2005. U.S. Embassy, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Available online at http://www.usemb-bishkek.rpo/at/ambassador_interview_azattyk.htm Last accessed 15 May 2005.

¹²⁰ Author’s interview with former U.S. Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan John O’Keefe, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 3 June 2005.

¹²¹ George W. Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” Washington D.C., 20 September 2001. Online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> Last accessed June 2005.

Both camps have highlighted the stabilizing and deterrent effect of American forces on extremist forces in Kyrgyzstan. Before the coup, President Akayev made a very public appearance at Manas to emphasize his contribution in the campaign against global terrorism, while the interim government continues to praise the American presence and reassure continued U.S. access.¹²²

Concerning Akayev's rule, the political benefits of U.S. engagement are less clear. Some analysts argue that the significant increase in U.S. engagement and presence in Central Asia allowed all regional leaders a certain freedom of movement concerning their grip on power. The Central Asian rulers recognized the changes in U.S. regional priorities, with security concerns and military operations rising above normative agenda items such as democracy and market reform.¹²³ The message received by the Central Asian presidents was that as long as the Central Asian states supported the United States with its high-priority issues like energy and Operation Enduring Freedom, the leaders could have more of a free hand to address the internal situation in their nation as they deemed fit.¹²⁴

President Akayev's position, though, was not the same as the other Central Asian leaders. The United States had been applying more pressure and investing more effort in democratic and market reform assistance in Kyrgyzstan than the other regional newly independent states.. Kyrgyzstan, too, did not have other options such as energy to use as leverage against the United States. President Akayev's capacity to use U.S. presence and implicit support of his regime as justification for power consolidation was a questionable proposition. As discussed below, Akayev likely realized his position was very fragile and taking too much of a free hand for his own good was not going to be in his best interest.

For example, Akayev almost started a civil war with a decision to transfer 125,000 hectares of territory in a 2002 border agreement with China. A Kyrgyz

¹²² Alexander Cooley, "Depoliticizing Manas: The Domestic Consequences of the U.S. Military Presence in Kyrgyzstan," PONARS Policy Memo 362, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 2005, 5. Available online at http://www.csis.org/ruseura/ponars/policymemos/pm_0362.pdf Last accessed 13 May 2005.

¹²³ McFarlane, "The United States and Regionalism in Central Asia," 458.

¹²⁴ McFarlane, "The United States and Regionalism in Central Asia," 458.

parliamentarian, Azimbek Beknazarov, publicly protested the agreement citing breaches in Constitutional procedures, calling for Akayev's impeachment. To mute this opposition, Kyrgyz security forces arrested Beknazarov on corruption charges. When Beknazarov was tried for this crime, protestors rallied in the southern Kyrgyz town of Aksy in his defense. The protestors would eventually overwhelm Kyrgyz security forces, and on 17-18 March 2002 local police fired on the crowd, killing seven civilians in the process. In turn, nation-wide protests formed calling for Akayev's resignation.

President Akayev refused to step down. Rather, he sacked his government from Prime Minister Kurmanbek Bakiev on down to appease calls for government accountability.¹²⁵ But President Akayev also knew not to push any further, for he could easily be forcibly removed from office with a strong public showing even with more than three years left in his term.¹²⁶ U.S. officials in Kyrgyzstan knew that Akayev's position was frail, but also knew that the order to shoot the civilians came from the untrained local security forces and not Akayev himself.¹²⁷ The United States was not giving political support to Akayev during this crisis. The events and their outcomes were of Akayev's doing alone. Akayev did receive political support from the United States, however, through his connections at the U.S. airbase.

One of the tangible political benefits the Akayev regime receive through increased U.S. engagement and presence in Kyrgyzstan involves contracts associated with Ganci airbase. The United States unwittingly improved the financial well-being of Akayev's inner circle through the many contracts awarded during and after the establishment of U.S. facilities at Ganci. Each aircraft landing at Manas is assessed a \$7,000 fee. These fees go not to the state, but to an organization called Manas Airport Consortium, often described as an independent joint-stock business with close ties to

¹²⁵ Kurmanbek Bakiev served as the acting President and Prime Minister in the timeframe between the March 2005 coup and the July 2005 Presidential elections.

¹²⁶ Martha Brill Olcott, "Lessons of the Tulip Revolution," Testimony before Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 7 April 2005. .

¹²⁷ Author's interview with former U.S. Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan John O'Keefe, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 3 June 2005.

President Akayev's family.¹²⁸ The landing fees are in addition to airfield lease and aircraft parking agreements. Furthermore, the company of Akayev's son-in-law, Adil Toigonbayev, received the airfield fuel contract, estimated to be worth U.S. \$25 million annually.¹²⁹ Finally, the former President's own son, Aidar Akayev, is reportedly to have received several contracts supporting base activities.¹³⁰ These examples highlight the role of patronage in Kyrgyzstan, with the United States unknowingly enfranchising the ruling elite further by signing these contracts, often without competing bids.

3. Kyrgyz Economic Benefits from U.S. Engagement, 2005

Kyrgyzstan continued to benefit from U.S. measures aimed at improving structures promoting trade and investment with Kyrgyzstan, while the increase in U.S. engagement in the region was matched by increases in U.S. assistance. Kyrgyz and U.S. officials signed the US-Kyrgyz Republic Memorandum on Bilateral Cooperation in February 2002. This document focused on increasing and solidifying economic cooperation between the two nations, establishing goals and delineating intentions for both sides.¹³¹ Additionally, the Kyrgyz Ambassador signed a Trade and Investment Agreement with the U.S. trade representative in July 2004. This program establishes a U.S.-Central Asian Council on Trade and Investment in order to facilitate efficient and barrier free economic exchanges between the two countries.¹³²

a. Kyrgyz Trade with the United States, 2005

Kyrgyz total trade turnover with the United States has increased since 2001. By 2004, clothing and apparel items account for almost two-thirds of all Kyrgyz exports to the United States (see Table 6).¹³³

¹²⁸ Cooley, 3. In several cases, the companies awarded the contract were also the only company capable of filling U.S. requirements for that service. In the expediency to establish the airbase, it was a known but accepted risk to establish contracts with established monopolies. Author's interview with U.S. Embassy Official, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 30 May 2005.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ U.S. Department of State, "US-Kyrgyz Republic Memorandum on Bilateral Cooperation," 15 February 2002. Available online at <http://www.bits.de/NRANEU/Central%Asia/kyrgyzcoop.html> Last accessed 12 May 2005.

¹³² Jim Nichol, "Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests," CRS Issue Brief for Congress IB93108, 18 February 2005, 13.

¹³³ U.S. Department of Commerce, TradeStats Express interactive website. Available online at <http://tse.export.gov> Last accessed 14 May 2005.

Table 6. Kyrgyz exports and imports with the United States, 1997-2003 (From: Source: International Monetary Fund)

Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Amount of Kyrgyz exports to the USA (U.S. \$)	18.19	7.6	11.3	2.9	7.08	36.06	6.52
% of total Kyrgyz worldwide exports	3%	1.5%	2.5%	0.5%	1.5%	7.4%	1.0 %
Amount of Kyrgyz imports from the USA (U.S. \$)	39.67	40.8	54.3	53.8	26.71	47.38	47.93
% of total Kyrgyz worldwide imports	5.6%	4.9 %	9.0%	9.7%	5.7%	8.1%	6.7%

Kyrgyzstan continued to import far more from the United States than it exports, with U.S. imports comprising between approximately 6-8% of all imported goods. Machinery, foodstuffs, and medical equipment continue to be the primary goods imported from U.S. companies (see Table 6).¹³⁴

b. U.S. Investment in Kyrgyzstan, 2005

U.S. Investment was stagnant in the first years after the 1998 economic crisis, but accelerated by 2003. FDI outside of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) made up 81.3% of all FDI for 2003, which increased from 77.4% from the previous year. The United States was fourth of the non-CIS investors with U.S. \$9 million (6.7% of all FDI), behind Canada, Turkey, and China.¹³⁵ The principle markets for U.S. investment include agriculture, telecommunications, services, and textiles.¹³⁶

c. U.S. Assistance to Kyrgyzstan, 2005

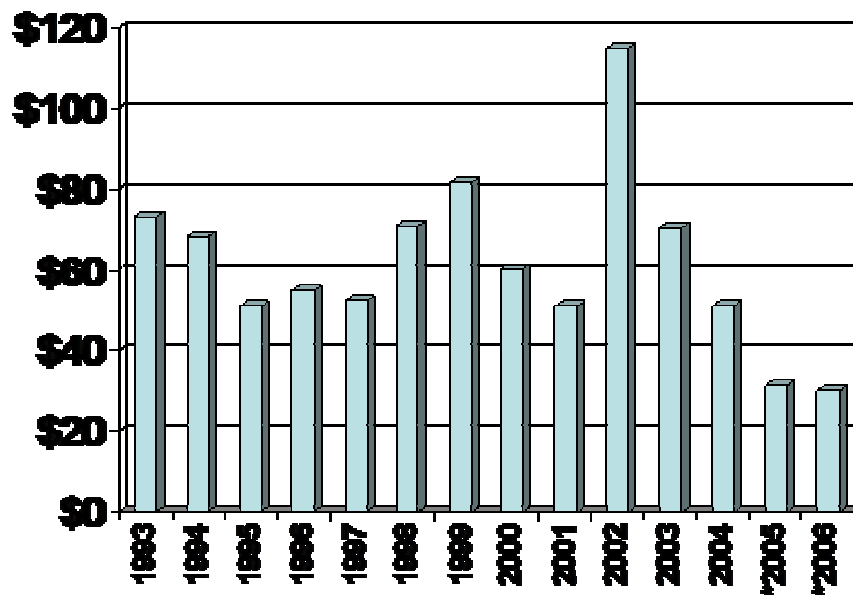
Kyrgyzstan benefited in the years immediately following the terrorist attacks on the United States with a significant outpouring of U.S. financial assistance. 2002 was the peak year of grants from the United States, with U.S. \$114.98 million allotted. Of this, 32% was earmarked as security assistance. Of the previous years, only

¹³⁴ U.S. Department of Commerce, TradeStats Express interactive website. Available online at <http://tse.export.gov> Last accessed 14 May 2005.

¹³⁵ BISNIS, "Rethinking Eurasia: Spotlight on Russia's Siberia & Urals and the Kyrgyz Republic," slide 11.

¹³⁶ Author's interview with U.S. Embassy Official, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 2 June 2005.

an average of 2-3% was annually granted for security programs (see Figure 10). Of note, assistance rates have settled to pre-9/11 amounts. In the post-9/11 era, assistance designated under the aegis of FREEDOM Support Act and distributed by USAID for democracy and market reform has remained consistent both pre- and post-9/11 (see Table 7).



* Only includes FREEDOM Support Act Budget Requests
Amounts are millions of U.S. dollars

Source: U.S. Department of State

Figure 10. U.S. Assistance to Kyrgyzstan, 1993-2006

4. Kyrgyz Security Benefits from U.S. Engagement, 2005

a. Security Guarantees, 2005

Despite the shared threat perceptions concerning international terrorism and extremism, what is still lacking from the Kyrgyz perspective is a formal security agreement with the United States. Kyrgyz membership in the “coalition of the willing” does not give it a legal guarantee from the United States to offer assistance in situations concerning armed aggression or even insurgent activity. U.S. presence alone has possibly acted as a deterrent factor, dissuading extremist groups from actively pursuing operations in Kyrgyzstan. But U.S. forces stationed at Manas are not designed to handle a threat like an armed insurgency crossing the Kyrgyz border from Tajikistan or

Uzbekistan. Soldiers trained for those operations would have to be flown in from Uzbekistan or Afghanistan to perform such tasks. It is unclear whether the United States would be assist Kyrgyzstan defend itself against another insurgent attack like the ones of 1999-2000.

Table 7. FREEDOM Support Act (FSA) and Security Percentages of U.S. Assistance to Kyrgyzstan, 1994-2006

	Total U.S. Assistance	Total / % FSA Funds	Total / % Security Funds
1994	\$68.3	\$37.1 / 37.0%	\$0.05 / <0.1%
1995	\$50.7	\$23.3 / 46.0%	\$0.06 / 0.1%
1996	\$54.5	\$16.0 / 29.4%	\$0.23 / 0.4%
1997	\$52.2	\$20.8 / 39.8%	\$1.1 / 2.1%
1998	\$70.8	\$24.87 / 35.1%	\$1.7 / 2.4%
1999	\$81.44	\$31.98 / 39.3%	\$1.9 / 2.3%
2000	\$66.09	\$30.1 / 45.5%	\$4.9 / 7.4%
2001	\$50.85	\$33.39 / 65.7%	\$10.1 / 19.8%
2002	\$114.98	\$71.44 / 62.1%	\$37.0 / 32%
2003	\$70.44	\$38.33 / 54.4%	\$11.36 / 16%
2004	\$50.8	\$36.24 / 71.3%	\$11.36 / 22%
2005	n/a	\$31.0 / n/a	n/a
2006	n/a	\$30.0 / n/a	n/a

Amounts are millions of U.S. dollars

Source: U.S. Department of State and Government Accountability Office

The IMU has been quietly gaining strength since 2001, and Kyrgyz and U.S. forces are evaluating indications of increased activity. The IMU detonated bombs in the Kyrgyz cities of Bishkek and Osh in 2002 and 2003 respectively, and an alleged IMU attack on the U.S. embassy was foiled before its execution.¹³⁷ Additionally, the IMU was responsible for another attack in Osh in 2004 in which one police officer was killed.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Jim Nichol, "Kyrgyzstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests," CRS Report for Congress 97-690, 26 May 2004, 4.

¹³⁸ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2004," 49.

b. Military Benefits, 2005

The Kyrgyz armed forces have benefited from substantial U.S. military assistance since early 2001. Through both traditional assistance channels as well as from supplemental funds, the Kyrgyz military has been able to increase the training of its troops as well as improve the equipment they use. Specific examples of focused Kyrgyz training from the United States include non-commissioned officer training for mountain troops, Special Forces, and peacekeeping soldiers.¹³⁹ The Kyrgyz have received medical training for its specialists, focusing on combat rescue situations.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, Kyrgyz Special Forces joined U.S. Special Forces in Exercise Balance Knight in 2004.¹⁴¹

Military equipment received from the United States is tailored to help the Kyrgyz armed forces move away from their reliance on Soviet-made equipment designed for large, armored, conventional battles. Thus, the Kyrgyz military could apply this equipment to areas where they needed the most help, including border control, counter-terrorism, Special Forces, and operations in mountainous terrain. Such equipment included night vision devices and communication equipment for border troops, off-road vehicles, and refurbished helicopters for border control.¹⁴² Additionally, several Kyrgyz military units received infrastructure upgrades such as barracks and shooting ranges from U.S. assistance.¹⁴³ Overall, both International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) rates increased since 2001 (see Table 8).

The Kyrgyz ability to respond and address its terrorist threat has improved with U.S. engagement. For example, Kyrgyz security and anti-terror specialists, who were specifically trained by U.S. Department of State-allocated Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) funds, responded to the scene of an assassination attempt on a Kyrgyz governmental official. Using the training received from the United States, the Kyrgyz

¹³⁹ Vladimir Socor, "Cheek in Jowl in Kyrgyzstan," *Johnson's Reading List*, #7282, 9 August 2003. Available online at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/7282-19.cfm> Last accessed May 2005.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Roger McDermott, *Countering Global Terrorism: Developing the Antiterrorist Capabilities of the Central Asian Militaries* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 22.

¹⁴² U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia, FY 2002: Country Assessments – Kyrgyz Republic," January 2003. Available online at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rpt/23623.htm> Last accessed June 2005.

¹⁴³ Author's interview with U.S. Embassy Official, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 30 May 2005.

specialists were able to perform post-event terrorist scene evaluations and evidence gathering. In turn, the security agents were able to produce evidence to warrant search warrants, raid suspected hideouts, and arrest several extremists and their weapons caches.¹⁴⁴

Table 8. U.S. Military Assistance to Kyrgyzstan, 1994-2006

Year	IMET	FMF	Total
1994	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000
1995	\$60,000	\$0	\$60,000
1996	\$231,000	\$0	\$231,000
1997	\$257,000	\$800,000	\$1,057,000
1998	\$336,000	\$1,350,000	\$1,686,000
1999	\$383,000	\$1,550,000	\$1,933,000
2000	\$358,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,358,000
2001	\$380,000	\$1,846,000	\$2,226,000
2002	\$600,000	\$11,000,000	\$11,600,000
2003	\$1,068,000	\$3,900,000	\$4,968,000
2004	\$1,047,000	\$4,075,000	\$5,122,000
2005	\$1,100,000	\$1,984,000	\$3,084,000
2006	\$1,100,000	\$2,000,000	\$3,100,000

Amounts are U.S. dollars

Source: U.S. Department of State and Federation of American Scientists
Website www.fas.org

5. Costs of Kyrgyz Engagement with the United States, 2005

In order to evaluate the costs of Kyrgyz engagement with the United States, two broad areas will be addressed. First, an evaluation of the costs endured by the Akayev regime before the March 2005 coup will be made. In turn, costs will be assessed which will apply to both the Akayev regime and those who seek the Kyrgyz presidency in the July 2005 elections.

Many observers and analysts commented that the emphasis on security-related issues and the prosecution of the Global War on Terrorism gave the Kyrgyz elite a free hand to consolidate power without fear of being held accountable to human rights violations. While it could be argued that comments and statements about human rights

¹⁴⁴ U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia, FY 2002: Country Assessments – Kyrgyz Republic."

and press freedom violations or declarations against suspicious elections might not have been as pronounced post-9/11, the United States did not abandon its commitment to Kyrgyzstan's democratic market transitions. Several facts support this point.

To begin with, the February 2005 Kyrgyz parliamentary elections were the first since 9/11, allowing no other visible opportunity for the United States to assess or protest the Kyrgyz electoral process. Although low-key, the U.S. government, through its mission to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), did protest Kyrgyz freedom of press violations and Constitutional referendums allegedly manipulated by President Akayev.¹⁴⁵ Additionally, the U.S. non-governmental organization Freedom House had consistently monitored changes in Kyrgyz status according to its ranking of individual freedoms and civil liberties. Freedom House is commonly used by the U.S. government as a metric for progress in democratic transitions, and in the case of Kyrgyzstan its slide backwards was visibly noticed.

Funding justifications for Kyrgyzstan's democratic and market transitions continued to receive attention in the post-9/11 years. The FY 2002 Kyrgyz report noted the increasing barriers erected by Kyrgyz officials in the development of independent media outlets, but reemphasized that small victories by USAID were contributing to a persistent campaign to ensure press freedoms.¹⁴⁶ The FY 2003 report stressed the critical role of U.S.-funded democratic reform programs leading up to the 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections.¹⁴⁷

In each year's annual assessment, the U.S. government chose to interpret the developments in Kyrgyzstan with cautious optimism. When reviewing the "checklist for grounds of ineligibility" in each year's State Department report, the President consistently answered "no" to the question of whether the Kyrgyz Republic has "engaged in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights or of

¹⁴⁵ See U.S. Department of State press statements "Freedom of the Media" at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2003/16768.htm> and "Kyrgyz Constitutional Referendum" at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2003/16878.htm> detailing the U.S. position on these issues.

¹⁴⁶ U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia, FY 2002: Country Assessments – Kyrgyz Republic," January 2003.

¹⁴⁷ U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia, FY 2003: Country Assessments – Kyrgyz Republic," January 2004. Available online at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rpt/37659.htm> Last accessed June 2005.

international law.”¹⁴⁸ The U.S. government methodically chose to not push too aggressively in this forum to address irregularities in Kyrgyz behavior, noting that problems concerning human rights and democracy exist while still authorizing financial assistance to the struggling Kyrgyz government.

It must be emphasized that increases in U.S. security assistance to Kyrgyzstan in the wake of 9/11 did not come at the expense of democracy and market reform programs. U.S. government funds specified under the FREEDOM Support Act constitute the majority of U.S. assistance for these agenda items, spread among technical support, expert advice, and grants to local organizations.¹⁴⁹ FSA money for Kyrgyzstan has been consistently allotted, especially in the years both before and after 9/11. The FY 2006 budget request of U.S. \$30 million continues the trend. See Table 10. All told, 23% of all FSA money granted to Kyrgyzstan since its independence has gone toward democracy promotion.¹⁵⁰ The remaining FSA funds are principally allocated for market reform and societal development programs. The increases in security assistance did not change the U.S. commitment to Kyrgyzstan’s democratic reform.

It is problematic to infer direct causality of the Kyrgyz revolution in March 2005 from U.S. democracy assistance. On the other hand, the United State might have decided to exert some influence, even in a small way, to bolster the efforts of the government opposition. Twelve years of U.S. assistance in Kyrgyzstan may have paid off after a long investment. Almost a generation of Kyrgyz youth has grown accustomed to the U.S. and Western approaches to aid and assistance through NGOs. Given this investment, the United States potentially decided to leverage some of those investments to help promote change in Central Asia. U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic Stephen Young suggested that a “peaceful transfer of power” would enable other similar transitions in the

¹⁴⁸ This checklist is standard for each year’s report on Assistance to Eurasia. For an example, see U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia, FY 2003 - Annex C: Assessments Required by the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999. Available online at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rpt/37681.htm> Last accessed June 2005.

¹⁴⁹ Curt Tarnoff, “U.S. Assistance to the Former Soviet Union,” Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report RL 32866, 14 April 2005, 1.

¹⁵⁰ CRS Ibid., 7. FY92-FY04, \$94 million out of \$408 million has been for democracy promotion.

other Central Asian Republics.¹⁵¹ Some observers even suggest that the United States views Kyrgyzstan as a “wedge to pry open its energy rich neighbors.”¹⁵² Even if U.S. actions are not as deliberate as this, there is the potential that U.S. representatives saw an opportunity to act on the words they had been preaching. Ambassador Young reminded observers after the coup that the United States had not strayed from its dedication to the spread of democracy. In an interview, Ambassador Young commented that...

...my mission in this country is to assist the people and government of Kyrgyzstan in their efforts to build a stable, prosperous, and democratic society...The fact is that we are in no way apologetic or ashamed of our support for democracy, and we have been very transparent in the various programs we have promoted to encourage free, fair, and transparent elections, the growth of civil society and the expansion of a free media.¹⁵³

Concerning an independent press, Ambassador Young found an opportunity to sustain U.S. commitments to a free and fair media. Kyrgyz opposition newspapers and printing presses have been frequent targets of government influence and control in recent years. After the parliamentary elections, a Freedom House-funded printing press was to print 200,000 copies of an opposition newspaper. When the printing press suspiciously lost power, the U.S. Embassy quickly provided generators to allow the printing to continue. The newspaper would eventually contribute to mobilizing opposition in protest of the elections, contributing to the revolution, which would occur later that month.¹⁵⁴ The United States chose to exercise some influence in this case. Although it is a small measure it helps show how fragile the Kyrgyz government's grip on power was and how sensitive it is to U.S. influence. U.S. officials downplay these efforts, noting that the United States has been focused on the election process in Kyrgyzstan, and that there were definitely “edgier” approaches to take with the old regime if desired.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ Michael Weinstein, “Kyrgyzstan’s Chronic Complications” Eurasianet Eurasia Insight, 18 March 2005. Available online at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp031805.shtml> Last accessed June 2005.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Stephen Young, “Ambassador Young’s On-the-Record Interview,” U.S. Embassy, Kyrgyzstan, 4 April 2005. Online at http://www.usemb-bishkek.rpo.at/ambassador_interview_local_reporter.htm Last accessed 15 May 2005.

¹⁵⁴ *New York Times*, “U.S. Helped to Prepare the Way for Kyrgyzstan’s Uprising,” 30 March 2005.

¹⁵⁵ Author’s interview with U.S. Embassy Official, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 1 June 2005.

Kyrgyz susceptibility to U.S. influence is not limited to the old regime. Those candidates considering running for the Kyrgyz presidency face similar costs as Akayev faced. First, the security benefits are becoming substantial. Kyrgyz soldiers are becoming accustomed to the high quality of U.S.-supplied equipment. Items such as night vision goggles are capability-enhancing items. When this equipment breaks or needs to be replaced, Kyrgyz soldiers will insist on the same capabilities to perform the tasks necessary for Kyrgyz security, preferring not to take a step backwards in capability. The costs of the United States not supplying this type of equipment or the funds to procure it are becoming high. More so, Kyrgyz soldiers are beginning to realize that Russia is not able to provide the amount or quality of equipment and assistance that the United States offers, further embedding the value of U.S. programs on average Kyrgyz soldiers.¹⁵⁶ Additionally, U.S. economic assistance continues to sustain market reform and democratic transition programs. The removal of these funds would undermine Kyrgyzstan's final push toward a free and democratic society, deepening the challenges from extremism, crime, and narcotic threats while stalling the Kyrgyz fight against poverty.

Finally, those who take the helm of Kyrgyzstan's government will have to decide how the relationship with the United States influences their relationship with Russia. Most observers generally see all the Kyrgyz Presidential candidates as having a pro-United States outlook.¹⁵⁷ The pro-U.S. stance might have long-term costs for Kyrgyzstan's relationship with Russia, although there is not enough evidence to evaluate this issue fully. The future Kyrgyz leadership will have to evaluate whether continued U.S. engagement is worth potential degradation to Kyrgyzstan's long history with the Russian people.

6. Assessment of the Kyrgyz-U.S. Relationship, 2005

Overall, the post-9/11 sensitivity assessment of Kyrgyzstan's relationship with the United States is rated as "sensitive." All dimensions of U.S. engagement have significantly deepened in Kyrgyzstan, and Kyrgyzstan's overall position in the international order would be significantly affected by the removal this engagement. U.S.

¹⁵⁶ Author's interview with U.S. Embassy Official, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 30 May 2005.

¹⁵⁷ Cooley, 5.

assistance strategies in both security and economic spheres are beginning to pay-off, while the political links between the two countries became further entrenched during and after the contested February 2005 Parliamentary elections. Kyrgyz sensitivity, even though considered strong in 2005, still has the potential to increase further with the United States should Kyrgyz policy makers choose to do so.

IV. KYRGYZSTAN AND RUSSIA

A. THE KYRGYZ-RUSSIAN RELATIONSHIP, JANUARY 2001

1. Russian Interest in Kyrgyzstan, 2001

Russia's interest in Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan at the beginning of 2001 is significant because it departs from its previous outlook. In his first year in office, President Putin brought Central Asia back into mainstream Russian foreign policy thinking after a decade of neglect under President Yeltsin. The Russian government issued a new National Security Concept in February 2000 and a Russian Military Doctrine in April 2000 articulating this vision, including some clear guidelines where Central Asia stood in Russia's larger foreign policy concept.

Recent NATO decisions such as expansion, agreement on out-of-area operations, and its air campaign against Serbia disturbed the Russian leadership.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, U.S. and NATO programs like International Military Education and Training (IMET), Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and Partnership for Peace (PfP) indicated a Western willingness to encroach on areas clearly within the strategic interest of the Russian Federation. On top of this, new economic challenges emerged from U.S. and European companies, specifically in the energy sector.¹⁵⁹ The Russian government was determined to reassert Russian primacy in the region. The National Security Concept emphasized the re-emergence of a multi-polar world and Russia's place in it, specifically opposing the "growing trend towards the establishment of a unipolar structure of the world with the economic and power domination of the United States."¹⁶⁰ Russia clearly wanted to counter the growing Western influence in Central Asia, suggesting it would use both bilateral and multilateral arenas to stem the influence of the United States and Europe and in turn create "a good-neighbor belt along the perimeter of Russia's borders."¹⁶¹ But Russia also perceived a genuine security threat from its southern flank.

¹⁵⁸ Lena Jonson, "Russia and Central Asia" in Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (ed.), *Central Asian Security: The New International Context* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 98-99.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Russian President, *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, 28 June 2000. Available online at http://www3.itu.int/MISSIONS/Russia/concept_doc/htm Last accessed 15 May 2005.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Russia was coming to terms with the depth of its threat from Islamic groups. The second war in Chechnya and Islamic offensives in Dagestan indicated to the Russians the expanding threat from extremism. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan's (IMU) incursions into Kyrgyzstan further embedded this mindset, convincing Putin that Russia needed to become more involved in the security of Central Asia.¹⁶² Putin perceived the events in Kyrgyzstan as a window of opportunity to increase Russia's own security in the south through regional cooperation with the Central Asian states.¹⁶³ Russia's concern with Central Asia was not the borders specifically, but the lack of barriers protecting Russia from all sources of instability originating from the south.¹⁶⁴ The Russians believed the flow of extremism, narcotics, and refugees could travel unhindered from Afghanistan and the former Soviet republics to Russia's border, and it was in their best security interest to prevent this from happening as close to the source as possible.¹⁶⁵

Russia's commitment to Kyrgyzstan thus revolved around a mutual desire to address the aforementioned transnational threats. Kyrgyzstan had always been receptive to Moscow's engagement, and an increased rapprochement in the late 1990s and early 2000 was welcomed by Bishkek. This was advantageous for Russia, since its relations with neighboring Uzbekistan could sometimes be acrimonious. With good relations with Kyrgyzstan and its southern neighbor Tajikistan, Russia could guarantee access into the region to address threats at the source.

2. Kyrgyz Political Benefits from Russian Engagement, 2001

The foundation of the Kyrgyz-Russian political dialogue is a series of bilateral agreements designed to show the commitment of each country to the next. The most recent agreement is the 2000 "Declaration of Eternal Friendship and Partnership between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation." This framework intended to uplift

¹⁶² Jonson, "Russia and Central Asia," 100.

¹⁶³ Lena Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia: The Shaping of Russian Foreign Policy* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 63.

¹⁶⁴ Dmitri Trenin, *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the Border between Geopolitics and Globalization* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), 187-188.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

Kyrgyzstan's relationship with Russia, indicating a determined effort by both parties of a long-term partnership. The Kyrgyz-Russian friendship is a natural bond on several accounts.

First and foremost, the shared history between Kyrgyzstan and Russia is continued through similar governments. Both are structured vertically with an increasing amount of control in the hands of the president. The Kyrgyz, like many of the other Central Asian states, maintain an excessive amount of Soviet legacy in their government, even as late as 2001. The Kyrgyz elites focus on their self-legitimacy, preventing opposition members from gaining power and stunting growth of a national ideology.¹⁶⁶

The Kyrgyz and the Russians even share common avenues for controlling their people, such as reigning in the media and harassing journalists.¹⁶⁷ With this common worldview on governance, Kyrgyzstan was able to gain a freedom of movement in its internal affairs, which it could not get from its relationship with Western states. Russia was not likely to criticize Kyrgyzstan or withhold assistance due to allegations or charges of human rights violations or perceived breaches in democratic principles. The one Kyrgyz internal affairs issue, which would spark Russia's interest was the well-being of the Russian diaspora still residing in Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyzstan's independence in 1991 brought challenges over the role of diaspora minorities in the new state. In 1991, the largest minority group in Kyrgyzstan by far was Russian. The Russian diaspora in Kyrgyzstan trace their roots to three periods in Soviet history where industrialization, collectivization, and economic restructuring brought thousands of Russians into the Kirghiz SSR.¹⁶⁸ By 1989, Russians composed 21.5% of

¹⁶⁶ Pauline Jones Luong, "Politics in the Periphery: Competing Views of Central Asian States and Societies," in Pauline Jones Luong, ed., *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies From Soviet Rule to Independence* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), 20.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 22.

¹⁶⁸ Rafis Abazov, "Economic Migration in Post-Soviet Central Asia: The Case of Kyrgyzstan," *Post-Communist Economics* 11, 2 (June 1999), 239.

the republic's citizens, second only to the titular Kyrgyz at 52.3%.¹⁶⁹ The Russians in Kyrgyzstan held a substantial percentage of the higher skilled industrial jobs in the country such as manufacturing, mining, and construction.¹⁷⁰

The economic realities of Kyrgyzstan's independence would significantly alter the balance of minority groups in the country, compelling many Russians to leave. Kyrgyzstan endured a massive de-industrialization with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Unfortunately for the Russian population in Kyrgyzstan, the economic "shock therapy" programs prescribed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund contained more shock than was expected. Despite some resentment by the Russian diaspora at early efforts to promote a Kyrgyz national identity, the real motive for Russian emigration would be economic.

Even though the Russians were a highly skilled labor force in Kyrgyzstan at the country's birth, they did not represent a significant force within the upper reaches of Kyrgyz political strata. In turn, the Russians were unable to carve out an economic niche for themselves after the massive de-industrialization occurred and were forced into minimal subsistence jobs.¹⁷¹ President Akayev understood the potential damage, which would follow a significant emigration of such a highly-skilled and under-utilized work force. He created multiple structures to entice Russians to stay in Kyrgyzstan. This included a zero-option citizenship policy, stating all residents of the Kirghiz SSR were legally entitled to full membership in the new Kyrgyzstan.¹⁷² Next, President Akayev implemented several educational programs designed to persuade Russians to stay. For example, students have the choice of which language, Kyrgyz or Russian, to have their primary education in. Kyrgyzstan also created a Slavic-centric university in Bishkek to promote the importance of Russia and Russian-studies in Kyrgyzstan. The most important gesture to the Russians, though, was Kyrgyzstan's language policy.

¹⁶⁹ Rafis Abazov, "Economic Migration in Post-Soviet Central Asia: The Case of Kyrgyzstan," *Post-Communist Economics* 11, 2 (June 1999), 240.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 247.

¹⁷¹ Michele E. Commercio, "Exit in the Near Abroad: The Russian Minorities in Latvia and Kyrgyzstan" *Problems of Post-Communism* 51, 6 (November/December 2004), 27.

¹⁷² Ibid., 24-25.

Upon independence, Kyrgyzstan constitutionally anchored Kyrgyz as the nation's state language. But President Akayev also understood that an accommodating language policy was needed for native and non-native Russian speakers in Kyrgyzstan.¹⁷³ Initially determined to be the primary language for "inter-ethnic communication," Russian would eventually be declared an "official" language on equal terms with Kyrgyz.¹⁷⁴ Akayev's language position was moderate, balancing those forces wanting either a Kyrgyz-based language policy or an "internationalist" policy advocating the primacy of Russian.¹⁷⁵ The move was necessary to prevent the flight of the Russians. Only one percent of all Russians spoke Kyrgyz, and the prospects of Russians learning the titular tongue seemed slim. Some suggest the timing of the May 2000 approval of Russian as an official language coincided with Kyrgyz efforts to please the new Russian President Vladimir Putin.¹⁷⁶ Of more importance is the fact it took five years for President Akayev to secure Parliamentary approval of Russian as an official language. The language policy was highly controversial, indicating a fragmentation within the Kyrgyz elites on necessities of such a move.

Akayev's treatment of the Russian minority generally pleased Moscow, and his willingness to promote such policies in spite of disagreement suggests other motives were at stake. A possible explanation includes Kyrgyz attempts to secure Russia's political favor as support for its engagement strategies with regional states, specifically Uzbekistan. With a strong working relationship with Russia, Kyrgyzstan was able to maneuver with more confidence with its neighbors, specifically Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan had been wary of Uzbekistan's regional ambitions with its large population, large military, protectionist economy, and repressive leader. Given its size and capacity, Kyrgyzstan needed political support to balance this regional dynamic.

¹⁷³ Michele E. Commercio, "Exit in the Near Abroad: The Russian Minorities in Latvia and Kyrgyzstan" *Problems of Post-Communism* 51, 6 (November/December 2004), 25.

¹⁷⁴ Commercio, "Exit in the Near Abroad: The Russian Minorities in Latvia and Kyrgyzstan."

¹⁷⁵ Bhavna Dave, "A Shrinking Reach of the State? Language Policy and Implementation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan" in Pauline Jones Luong, ed., *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies From Soviet Rule to Independence* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), 138.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

At the turn of the century, several factors highlight Kyrgyzstan's relationship with Uzbekistan. The IMU incursions of 1999 and 2000 into Kyrgyzstan exacerbated existing differences between Uzbekistan's President Karimov and Kyrgyzstan's President Akayev. Karimov believed Akayev was not tough enough in handling the incursions, allowing extremists and terrorists to operate with little government resistance. President Karimov berated Akayev, saying "These things are happening because of the weak policy carried out by the Kyrgyz Government. This kind of humane attitude towards terrorists will lead to this kind of conduct."¹⁷⁷ Uzbekistan had to step in and help the struggling Kyrgyz military with air support, which the Kyrgyz were unable to provide for themselves.

Additional factors make the Kyrgyz-Uzbek relationship difficult. The borders between the two countries are still being contested since each gained their independence, with both sides refusing to honor the settlement offers the other state puts forward. Using the IMU incursions as a justification, Uzbekistan mined its border with Kyrgyzstan, resulting in several civilian deaths.¹⁷⁸ Finally, Uzbekistan routinely shuts off natural gas supplies to Kyrgyzstan as a means of pressing its smaller neighbor to repay its debts and as a penalty for Kyrgyzstan's water policy toward Uzbekistan. President Akayev mused over his country's own impotence in its relationship with Uzbekistan, noting that it is just "a small country unable to do much" with its belligerent neighbor.¹⁷⁹

To mitigate this threat, Kyrgyzstan sought Russia's favor and support, either explicitly or implicitly, so it could keep Uzbekistan at bay. These moves were simultaneous with Uzbekistan's methodical decision to seek political support outside of Russia. Uzbekistan did not renew its Collective Security Treaty (CST) membership in 1999, and by mid-2000 President Karimov was denouncing Russian efforts to regain a foothold in Central Asia through an over-estimation of the Islamic and extremist

¹⁷⁷ Lena Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia: The Shaping of Russian Foreign Policy* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 55.

¹⁷⁸ Olikier and Szayna, *Faultlines in Central Asia*, 328.

¹⁷⁹ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, 77.

threat.¹⁸⁰ From an external perspective, Kyrgyzstan's preferred choice was to balance with Russia against Uzbekistan. In turn, this also applied to Kyrgyzstan's internal situation.

In addition to using Russia's political support to balance its external neighbor, Kyrgyzstan also used its pro-Russian policy to balance the rising influence of the Uzbek minority in Kyrgyzstan. By 1999, Uzbeks surpassed Russians as the predominant minority group with 14% of the population. Kyrgyz authorities, however, never pursued favorable policies in language or citizenship for its Uzbek citizens as it did for its Russian minority. Although Uzbeks are now the largest minority group in Kyrgyzstan, there has been a deliberate choice to not offer the same language honors as Russian received.¹⁸¹

Kyrgyz leaders were wary of the growing power base of the Uzbek minority inside Kyrgyzstan and used a deliberate process of inaction to keep Uzbek influence to a minimum. Some speculate that the growing Uzbek population in southern Kyrgyzstan will lead to an increased push for Uzbek language rights in the region.¹⁸² But the Uzbeks are significantly marginalized in Kyrgyz society, where the established Kyrgyz feel threatened by the self-confident and aggressively nationalistic Uzbeks.”¹⁸³ Uzbeks are underrepresented in both regional and national agencies, contributing to the alienation of the population. Additionally, Uzbeks are some of the poorest citizens in Kyrgyzstan. Despite the potential instability from Kyrgyzstan's Uzbek population, President Akayev chose to align with the Russian minority as a way of keeping the Uzbek minority at bay.

3. Kyrgyz Economic Benefits from Russian Engagement, 2001

Kyrgyzstan has maintained strong economic ties with Russia since gaining its independence. Their common history, similar infrastructure, and similar transitional challenges allowed the two countries to build strong economic relations the first ten years after the fall of the Soviet Union. These historical ties give Russia a comparative advantage over markets such as the United States, Europe, and even China. Much of the

¹⁸⁰ Roy Allison, “Conclusion: Central Asian Security in the Regional and International Context” in Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (ed.), *Central Asian Security: The New International Context* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 260-261.

¹⁸¹ Dave, 144.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 146.

world had not gained the confidence and the depth of knowledge necessary to conduct business in Central Asia.¹⁸⁴ The Central Asian states, for their part, have made investment and business challenging due to the nature of their transitional economies as well as other systemic factors like corruption and clan patronage. Central Asia's leadership is a product of the Soviet educational and class system, with many leaders part of the nomenklatura, helping engrain world views on central authority and state control of economic matters.¹⁸⁵ Finally, the transportation and communication link in Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan's, conveniently travel north toward Russia. It will take a long-term investment to build an infrastructure able to overcome this historical advantage.

Given these links, several protocols frame Kyrgyzstan's economic relationship with Russia. They were both original signatories of the 1996 Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Customs Union. In turn, the Customs Union evolved into the existing Eurasian Economic Community in October 2000. Finally, President Putin and President Akayev signed a Treaty on Economic Cooperation for 2000-2009, aligning when possible the economic goals between the two countries.

a. Kyrgyz Trade with Russia, 2001

Given the strong historical ties between the two countries, it is no surprise that Russia was Kyrgyzstan's principal trading partner in the second half of the 1990s. In this timeframe, however, Kyrgyzstan's exports to Russia had fallen from U.S. \$104.8 million to U.S. \$65 million, as Kyrgyzstan attempted to diversify its export recipients after its 1998 accession into the WTO. By 2000, Russia held approximately 13% of Kyrgyzstan's export market, third behind Germany and Uzbekistan.

Russian imports to Kyrgyzstan have carried the weight of the trade turnover between the two countries. Kyrgyz imports from Russia have consistently been between 18%-26% of total Kyrgyz imports. As will be discussed, 1999's 18% total is a direct result of the 1998 Russian economic crisis. Kyrgyzstan primarily imports its

¹⁸⁴ Rajan Menon, transcript from a presentation at the conference "Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Reorientations, Internal Transitions, and Strategic Dynamics," April 2000, Warrenton, Virginia. Conference proceedings dated October 2000.

¹⁸⁵ Menon, transcript from a presentation at the conference "Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Reorientations, Internal Transitions, and Strategic Dynamics."

petroleum from Russia since it has very little of its own reserves. In 1999, 22% of imports were petroleum or petroleum-related products, highlighting Kyrgyzstan's acute need for fossil fuels.¹⁸⁶

b. Russian Investment in Kyrgyzstan, 2001

Like the United States, Russian foreign direct investment in Kyrgyzstan was sporadic and, ultimately, marginal by 2000. Between 1995 and 2000, Russian investment in Kyrgyzstan never peaked above U.S. \$1.2 million annually. Russian FDI in 2000 was only U.S. \$1.0 million, while Kyrgyzstan held a net outflow of investment for the year. Two explanations are possible for such low levels of FDI. First, the Russian business sector was in no position in 2000 to invest substantially outside the Federation, in light of the 1998 economic crisis. Additionally, conditions in Kyrgyzstan did not promote deep investment. Kyrgyzstan held few attractive privately-owned sectors available for investment. Privatization of Kyrgyz telecommunication and energy sectors would help reverse this trend.¹⁸⁷ Additionally, tax benefits are random in Kyrgyzstan and not structured in a manner conducive to attracting foreign companies.¹⁸⁸

c. Russian Assistance to Kyrgyzstan, 2001

Just as Kyrgyzstan was unable to reap benefits from the Russian private sector in 2000, it also struggled to obtain bilateral assistance from the Russian government. A major barrier to Russian assistance was the rapidly-expanding debt Kyrgyzstan owed to Russia. Kyrgyzstan's debt to Russia constitutes only a part of a larger and burgeoning debt problem facing the struggling nation. The severity of the debt prevents Kyrgyzstan from reaping any assistance benefits at this timeframe. As of 31 December 2000, Kyrgyzstan's total government and government guaranteed liabilities stood at U.S. \$1.5 billion. Of this, Kyrgyzstan owed U.S. \$186 million (12%) to Russia,

¹⁸⁶ United Nations, *2002 International Trade Statistics Yearbook, Volume 1* (New York: United Nations Publication, 2004), 571.

¹⁸⁷ Anders Aslund, "The Road to Sustained Economic Growth and Welfare," United Nations 1999 Kyrgyzstan Report, Chap 3-15-f, Available online at <http://www.undp.kg/english/publications/1999/aar> Last accessed 18 May 2005.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, Chap 3-15-c.

making the Russian Federation its largest bilateral creditor.¹⁸⁹ Given the extent of the debt, Kyrgyzstan finds Russia reluctant to provide any further monetary assistance.

4. Kyrgyz Security Benefits from Russian Engagement, 2001

a. Security Guarantees, 2001

Like many of the former Soviet republics, Kyrgyzstan realized that independence brought with it several challenges, including territorial security and national defense. After becoming an independent nation, President Akayev advocated not forming a military, desiring instead to become the “Switzerland” of Asia. “We are for a neutral Kyrgyzstan and do not intend to enter into any military blocks...we do not want an army” Akayev boldly stated.¹⁹⁰ Akayev had three primary motives for not forming a military. First, he felt that in the new post-Soviet world of Central Asia no specific threat existed which warranted having a military. This low threat assessment help Akayev justify the second and more realistic argument against creating an independent military - money. Akayev was concerned that his new state would be financially burdened upon independence and during market reform. A military would be an unnecessary toll given the world’s perceived peace.¹⁹¹ Finally, the first two concerns led to Akayev justifying collective security arrangements as substitution for a national army. Akayev was immediately drawn to the Commonwealth of Independence States (CIS) and willingly threw his support to the Russian security umbrella as the answer to his armed forces dilemma. Thus, Kyrgyzstan was an enthusiastic supporter of the establishment of the Collective Security Treaty (CST) under the CIS in 1992, believing that any security treaty is better than none at all.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, “Poverty Reduction, Growth and Debt Sustainability in Low-Income CIS Countries, 4 February 2002, 31. Available online at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/eu2/2002/edebt/eng/040202.pdf> Last accessed 19 May 2005.

¹⁹⁰ Maxim Shashenkov, “Central Asia: Emerging Military-Strategic Issues,” in *After Empire: The Emerging Geopolitics of Central Asia*, Joe C. Snyder, ed. (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1995), 89.

¹⁹¹ Bakhrom Tursunov & Marina Pikulina, “Severe Lessons of Batken”, United Kingdom Defence Academy Conflict Studies Research Centre document K28, November 1999, 4. Available online at http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/CentralAsia/K28/file_view Last accessed June 2005.

¹⁹² J H Saat, “The Collective Security Treaty Organization,” United Kingdom Defence Academy Conflict Studies Research Centre, Central Asian Series document 05/09, February 2005, 3. Available online at <http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/CentralAsia/05%2809%29-JHS.pdf> Last accessed June 2005.

Although the Collective Security Treaty included solidarity language such that aggression on one state would constitute aggression on all members, the truth is that the CST was a structure designed against threats the Central Asian states were not expecting to face.¹⁹³ Nonetheless, the CST was Kyrgyzstan's principal mechanism for security in 2001. Kyrgyzstan was also Central Asia's most enthusiastic member of the CIS regional air defense agreement. Since Kyrgyzstan's Air Force was practically non-existent, this agreement allowed it to fall under the protection of Russian-sponsored air defense system. The Russians funded most of the equipment and provided training for Kyrgyz troops in the process. Most importantly, though, the Kyrgyz could now rely on a larger source for air power support instead of having to rely on Uzbekistan like they did in the 1999 and 2000 incursions.¹⁹⁴

The IMU incursions in 1999 and 2000 demonstrated clearly to the Kyrgyz that they were in no position to adequately address the extremist and terrorist threat. What Kyrgyzstan needed was clear moral and physical support in its fight against these forces. Russia was able to provide these benefits to Kyrgyzstan like no other country or organization could. Kyrgyzstan solicited Russian assistance in the anti-extremist fight through both bilateral and multilateral avenues. To help its campaign of securing Russian aid, Kyrgyzstan pledged its support of Russia's war in Chechnya.¹⁹⁵ More importantly for Kyrgyzstan, they were able to secure a stronger commitment from the Russians to aid Kyrgyz anti-terror and extremist efforts.

Kyrgyzstan's was disappointed by Russia's unwillingness to provide troops during the 1999 and 2000 incursions.¹⁹⁶ The consecutive attacks, however, convinced Russia that the threat was serious enough to be considered "international

¹⁹³ J H Saat, "The Collective Security Treaty Organization," United Kingdom Defence Academy Conflict Studies Research Centre, Central Asian Series document 05/09, February 2005, 3. Available online at <http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/CentralAsia/05%2809%29-JHS.pdf> Last accessed June 2005, 3.

¹⁹⁴ Henry Plater-Zyberk, "Kyrgyzstan: Focusing on Security," United Kingdom Defence Academy Conflict Studies Research Centre, Central Asian Series Paper K41, November 2003, 10. Available online at http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/CentralAsia/K41/file_view Last accessed June 2005.

¹⁹⁵ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessments, "External Affairs: Kyrgyzstan," 14 June 2004.

¹⁹⁶ They did receive technical advisors and \$1 million in equipment from Russia, but no direct combat support. See Plater-Zyberk, 10.

terrorism.”¹⁹⁷ In October 2000, Kyrgyz Prime Minister Amangeldy Muraliev was able to draw a pledge from President Putin of Russian assistance in countering future terrorist attacks.¹⁹⁸ Although it was not a formal guarantee, it was better than any other bilateral arrangement Kyrgyzstan could secure.

The Kyrgyz were also able to enlist Russian help for their anti-terror efforts via multilateral organizations. Two of Kyrgyzstan’s principal security commitments adopted anti-terror commitments as part of their charter by 2000. The CST reorganized itself functionally to address regional threats like terrorism.¹⁹⁹ Kyrgyzstan and Russia, along with Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, announced in March 2000 the creation of a CIS anti-terrorist center.²⁰⁰ Finally, in October 2000 the CST members committed to the creation of collective anti-terror forces, but stopped short of allocating specific units to the program.

Kyrgyzstan and Russia were both also members of the Shanghai Five Organization. Although initially conceived by China as a forum for reducing tensions on border-related issues in Central Asia, the Shanghai Five was evolving into a regional security structure by the turn of the century. This included an emphasis on addressing terrorism and extremism.²⁰¹ A series of summits and meetings showed the evolution of this organization. In late fall 1999, Bishkek hosted a meeting of the representatives of the security service and law enforcement bodies from Shanghai Five members, where they signed a memorandum agreeing to cooperate in anti-terror, anti-narcotic, and illegal migration programs. By the second of two summits in the spring of 2000, all five members of the Shanghai Five were advocating the creation of a legal foundation for their shared fight against terrorism and extremism. The result was the Dushanbe Declaration, which committed the members to changing the Shanghai Five into a stronger

¹⁹⁷ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, 64.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 66.

¹⁹⁹ Saat, 4.

²⁰⁰ Konstantin Syroezhkin, “Central Asia between the Gravitational Poles of Russia and China” in *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* Boris Rumer ed. (Armonk, New York and London: M. E. Sharpe Press, 2002), 189-189.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 180. In early 2001, the members of the Shanghai Five were Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and China.

regional organization.²⁰² This agreement also upheld the members' commitment to build their own anti-terrorist center in the region. In sum, Kyrgyzstan was able to secure Russia's help in addressing its critical vulnerability against terrorism by engaging Russia bilaterally on the issue as well as joining Russia in regional fora designed to address their mutual concern.

b. Military Benefits, 2001

The Kyrgyz military benefited broadly from both the equipment it received from Russia as well as the training opportunities available either through bilateral agreements or via multilateral military maneuvers. Kyrgyzstan's military equipment is predominantly Russian. Since it lacks its own defense industry it must continually seek support and replacement equipment from the Russians. The Russian military industrial complex, however, often supplies Kyrgyzstan with equipment at preferential rates due to its membership in the CST.²⁰³ Russia will often unilaterally agree to modernize certain aspects of the Kyrgyz military when it is in its best interest. For example, Russia signed an agreement to modernize Kyrgyzstan's border defenses in hopes of improving the Kyrgyz capacity to address insurgent crossings and illicit trafficking in October 2000.²⁰⁴ Russia entered into a bilateral agreement with Kyrgyzstan to provide technical equipment to strengthen the Kyrgyz border defenses on the Kyrgyz-Sino border, as well as modernizing and repairing communication equipment for Kyrgyz border troops.²⁰⁵ Russia also agreed at a CIS summit to provide attack helicopters and armored vehicles tailored for employment in mountainous terrain.²⁰⁶

Russia is an indispensable source of education and training for the Kyrgyz military. Kyrgyzstan does not have the capability to educate its officer corps, and thus most of them receive their primary training in Russia.²⁰⁷ In the first decade of

²⁰² Konstantin Syroezhkin, "Central Asia between the Gravitational Poles of Russia and China" in *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* Boris Rumer ed. (Armonk, New York and London: M. E. Sharpe Press, 2002), 198-199.

²⁰³ Rustam Burnashshev, "Regional Security in Central Asia: Military Aspects" in *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* Boris Rumer ed. (Armonk, New York and London: M. E. Sharpe Press, 2002), 150-151.

²⁰⁴ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessments, "External Affairs: Kyrgyzstan," 14 June 2004.

²⁰⁵ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, 69.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Burnashshev, 150.

independence, it is estimated that 700 Kyrgyz soldiers received training in Russia.²⁰⁸ The Russians provide critical technical assistance in Kyrgyzstan as well. When Russia transferred the responsibility for Kyrgyz border security back to Kyrgyzstan, a cadre stayed in country to provide assistance and advice to Kyrgyzstan's new National Border Service.²⁰⁹ Finally, Kyrgyz soldiers exercised and trained alongside their Russian counterparts, often in Kyrgyzstan. Exercises like Southern Shield 2000 allowed Kyrgyz troops to maneuver with Russian forces in small-unit tactics against insurgent-style operations.²¹⁰ Together, the military equipment and training Kyrgyzstan receives is necessary to sustain the neglected Kyrgyz military. Without that assistance, Kyrgyzstan's security situation would be grave.

5. Costs of Kyrgyz Engagement with Russia, 2001

Given the wide range of benefits Kyrgyzstan received from its relationship with Russia at the beginning of 2001, it in turn endured substantial costs across all dimensions of the relationship. Although Kyrgyzstan politically benefited from balancing with Russia to counter Uzbekistan's bellicose attitude, it was also subject to Russia's whim whether it wanted to side with the Kyrgyz. Even though relations had soured by 2000 between Russia and Uzbekistan, it was not for lack of Russia trying to make the relationship work.

The role of the Russian minority had yet to become a source of substantial friction between Kyrgyzstan and Russia as it has in other countries such as Latvia. As President Putin's tone suggests in a speech on Russian-Kyrgyz relations, the situation is one of mutual understanding and benefit. Putin comments that he "...highly appreciate[s] the policy of the Russian language, of Russian-language cultural space."²¹¹ Some Russians, however, are quick to emphasize at least vocally a willingness to protect the diaspora if necessary. Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev commented that "There might be

²⁰⁸ Plater-Zyberk, 10.

²⁰⁹ Lena Jonson, "Russia and Central Asia" in *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, Roy Allison and Lena Jonson ed. (Washington D.C.: Brooking Institution Press, 2001), 107.

²¹⁰ Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia: Common Legacies and Conflicts" in *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, Roy Allison and Lena Jonson ed. (Washington D.C.: Brooking Institution Press, 2001), 32.

²¹¹ Vladimir Putin, "Speech by Russian President Vladimir Putin Before Start of Russian-Kyrgyz Talks in Extended Composition, Bishkek, December 5, 2002." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Information and Press Department.

cases when it is necessary to use armed force to defend our citizens and compatriots abroad.”²¹² Although many analysts agree a gap exists between Russian rhetoric and its capability to influence the situation of the Russian minority in neighboring countries, it was possible at the time for Russia to use some sort of economic stick to influence minority affairs in Kyrgyzstan.²¹³ Additionally, the argument of diaspora protection is considered a latent Russian means to potentially influence other outcomes in Kyrgyzstan, not the actually end goal itself.²¹⁴ The ethnic card became a hidden source of leverage available for Russia to use.

Much of the animosity between Russia and Uzbekistan was due to President Karimov’s intransigence toward his relationship with Russia. Karimov saw many of the Russian overtures in Central Asia as empty promises, only harboring Russian ambition to reassert itself in the region.²¹⁵ But Russia knew that Uzbekistan was a critical component of Central Asian security, and it would be preferred if the two countries could find a common ground on security and economic related matters. President Putin even offered to make Uzbekistan “the pre-eminent country and privileged partner of Russia” in Central Asia.²¹⁶ Kyrgyzstan could not control or influence Russia’s engagement strategy with Uzbekistan, hoping to not be forgotten if a strong Russian-Uzbek alliance emerges. For its part, Russia did not always approve of Kyrgyzstan’s willingness to seek Western support in the economic and security dimensions. Kyrgyzstan’s request for assistance from Russia during the IMU incursions came at a time when Russia was trying to improve its relations with Uzbekistan. Despite the emergence of a clear extremist threat, Russia was not willing to sacrifice its overtures to Uzbekistan for the sake of Kyrgyzstan.²¹⁷ This partially explains why Russia offered military aircraft to Uzbekistan and not to Kyrgyzstan during the incursions in 2000.

²¹² Igor Zevelev, *Russia and its New Diasporas*, (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001), 153.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Roy Allison, “Conclusion: Central Asian Security in the Regional and International Context,” 260-261.

²¹⁶ Roy Allison, “Conclusion: Central Asian Security in the Regional and International Context,” 260.

²¹⁷ Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 199.

Economically, Kyrgyzstan remained acutely sensitive to Russia. Even though Russia was Kyrgyzstan's premier economic partner, the cost it bore in the relationship was substantially high. Three examples help support this point. First, the Kyrgyz economy in 2000, as it had been the previous decade, was excessively tied to Russia's economy. Any tremors in Russia's economy would undoubtedly be felt in Kyrgyzstan. The 1998 Russian financial crisis confirms this point.

The collapse of the ruble directly influenced Kyrgyz exports to not only Russia, but to other Central Asian states like Kazakhstan. The depressed Russian markets prevented Russian and Kazakh buyers from purchasing Kyrgyz non-energy and mineral exports, significantly impacting Kyrgyzstan's 1999 overall export levels and, in turn, depressing the country's GDP.²¹⁸ Additionally, the dramatic fall of the ruble gave a window of opportunity to Russian exporters of ferrous and non-ferrous metals, machinery, and equipment, allowing them to suddenly be competitive with the Kyrgyz exporters.²¹⁹ This competition cut into Kyrgyz market shares. The final impact of the Russian financial crisis on Kyrgyzstan was the reduction of capital into the country. Russian and Kazakh investors withdrew their funds and investments from Kyrgyzstan in short order, including a significant number of Kyrgyz government securities. This capital flight, compounded by Kyrgyzstan's weak banking sector, made it extremely difficult for Kyrgyzstan to attract more investors.²²⁰

Kyrgyzstan's second major economic cost in its relationship with Russia in 2001 was its exploding debt. With the total debt to Russia at the end of 2000 at U.S. \$186 million, the interest alone was overwhelming Kyrgyzstan. This debt became an albatross around Kyrgyzstan's neck, with Russia in control of the situation. Kyrgyzstan's total debt was influencing its capacity to introduce and implement sorely needed poverty reduction programs.²²¹ If left unchecked, Kyrgyzstan's debt would prevent it from

²¹⁸ Gonzalo Pastor and Tatiana Damjanovic, "The Russian Financial Crisis and its Consequences for Central Asia," International Monetary Fund Working Paper 01-169, October 2001, 11.

²¹⁹ Pastor and Damjanovic, 11.

²²⁰ Ibid, 12.

²²¹ Abraham Becker, "Some Economic Dimensions of Security in Central Asia and South Caucasus" in Olga Oliker and Thomas S. Szayna ed., *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the U.S. Army* (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 2003), 45.

achieving fiscal sustainability by 2010.²²² With the massive debt owed by Kyrgyzstan, Russia held substantial leverage it could use as required.

Finally, Russia had other economic sticks it could and did use during this timeframe to influence Kyrgyzstan. For example, Russia imposed heavy value-added taxes on Kyrgyz goods. Kyrgyz exporters were forced to pay taxes on goods, which typically would be paid by the Russian consumer.²²³ Kyrgyzstan lost U.S. \$38 million on tariffs to Russia in 1998.²²⁴ This falls in line with the logic that Russia would use economic sticks with the Central Asian countries rather than carrots to manipulate outcomes in its favor.²²⁵

Finally, Kyrgyzstan's security arrangement with Russia was costly, especially if the Russians would remove the protection and assistance provided. Although Kyrgyzstan's security ties with Russia were not concrete, it was the best they could secure from any other relationship. Being small and sandwiched between multiple larger states, Kyrgyzstan had no choice but to seek Russia's favor for its security. When Uzbekistan chose to not renew its membership in the Collective Security Treaty in 1999, it did so because it felt it could provide for its own protection in a manner just as successful as any regional organization could provide. Kyrgyzstan, though, was unable to say the same.²²⁶ It needed Russia's protection, seeking it through both bilateral and multilateral venues.

Additionally, Kyrgyzstan was subjected to Russia's indifference. Russia would prioritize its relationship with Uzbekistan at any given moment without concerning itself with the ramifications in Kyrgyzstan. Lastly, the advantage of Kyrgyzstan's similar

²²² The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, "Poverty Reduction, Growth and Debt Sustainability in Low-Income CIS Countries, 4 February 2002, 31. Available online at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/eu2/2002/edebt/eng/040202.pdf> Last accessed 19 May 2005.

²²³ S. Frederick Starr, "Tiny Kyrgyzstan Follows the West's Rules but Gets No Rewards," *Johnson's Reading List* #3057, 17 February 1999. Available online at <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/3057.html> Last accessed June 2005.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Robert Levgold, "Panel IV: View from the Periphery," transcript from a presentation at the conference "Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Reorientations, Internal Transitions, and Strategic Dynamics," 5-7 April 2000, Warrenton, Virginia. Conference proceedings dated October 2000.

²²⁶ Lena Jonson, "Russia and Central Asia, in *Central Asia: The New International Context*, Roy Allison and Lena Jonson ed. (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 105.

military infrastructure and training with Russia was a cost as well as a benefit. With so much of its military equipment produced in Russia and without its own industry, Kyrgyzstan had no choice but to seek parts, supplies, and replacements from Russian contractors.

6. Assessment of the Kyrgyz-Russian Relationship, 2001

Kyrgyzstan's relationship with Russia in 2001 is determined to be "sensitive," strongly weighted by both the economic and security dimensions of this relationship. Despite WTO membership, Kyrgyzstan's economy is excessively tied to Russia. Intentional and unintentional actions within Russian markets would severely impact Kyrgyzstan's economy. Kyrgyz debt to Russia has become unmanageable, while trade patterns are still tied to regional dynamics. From a security perspective, Kyrgyzstan has no other option than to seek Russia's security umbrella. Russia was the one entity most likely to offer assistance should another extremist incursion occur like the ones the two previous summers. Additionally, Kyrgyzstan is subject to variations in Russia's commitment to Kyrgyzstan. If Russia chose to favor another party while pursuing its own interests, Kyrgyzstan would be left to its own devices. Unfortunately, Kyrgyzstan's devices are not strong. Without Russia, Kyrgyzstan would struggle for its own survival.

B. THE KYRGYZ-RUSSIAN RELATIONSHIP, MAY 2005

1. Russian Interest in Kyrgyzstan, 2005

Russia's interest in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 is framed by both security concerns and geopolitical considerations. The U.S.-led post-9/11 military campaigns against the Taliban in Afghanistan benefited Russia, directly addressing the source of Russia's threats stemming from its vulnerable south. President Putin realized the potential advantages of the U.S.-led operations, and his willingness to support and encourage the campaigns against the Taliban indicates his recognition of shared responsibility to oppose terrorism in Central Asia.²²⁷ But there is enough evidence to suggest that by 2002 Putin desired to regain the initiative of state-supported security on its southern flank, seeking avenues to counter U.S. efforts in the region.²²⁸

²²⁷ Roy Allison, "Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy," *International Affairs* 80, 2 (March 2004), 285.

²²⁸ Roy Allison, "Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy," *International Affairs* 80, 2 (March 2004), 285.

To help justify Russia's reinvigorated security concerns in Central Asia, President Putin reminded the Central Asian leaders of not only Russia's historical ties to the region, but also its geographic position, permanently entwining Russia in security concerns of these states. The message was that although the United States is active in Central Asia now, Russia will always be there forever.²²⁹ If Russia were to act as a permanent force in Central Asia, it needed to boost its self-image to play the part. Putin proclaimed in a speech in July 2002 that Russia was a great power alongside the United States, and would position itself to play the part in the region.²³⁰ This posturing is less about addressing specific threats in Central Asia and more about regaining in the region the initiative from the United States. As Russian Foreign minister Igor Ivanov relates,

I want to tell you that most will depend not on how much hot air we talk but how we act in real terms in these regions. If we actively develop relations with Central Asian countries, build long-term economic ties, give credits to serious projects, train cadres (including military cadres) cost-free, and develop military-technical cooperation, our positions will not weaken. If we only talk but do little substantial in Central Asia, then, of course, the vacuum will be filled by others.²³¹

The actual manifestation of Russia's renewed interest is both through bilateral agreements and multilateral structures, using both security and economic strategies to attempt to bind the Central Asian Republics to Russia's assistance. Russia is promoting a forward security zone mindset to help address regional threats, significantly increasing its regional presence to thwart potential threats. Russia's decision to open an airbase in Kant, Kyrgyzstan with a fifteen-year lease shows Russia's commitment to a visible long-term presence in the region.²³²

Economically, Russia seeks agreements, which also tie the Central Asian states to the Russian Federation. Previous attempts at economic hegemony have been largely unsuccessful, with little progress achieved through efforts such as the Customs Union, Free Trade Zone, and Eurasian Economic Community.²³³ Thus, Russia has focused on

²²⁹ Ibid., 277.

²³⁰ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, 98.

²³¹ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, 98.

²³² Ibid., 96.

²³³ Boris Rumer, "The Powers in Central Asia," *Survival* 44, 3 (Autumn 2002), 60.

bilateral strategies, often through energy agreements and favorable trade arrangements. One analyst notes that Russia's principle economic strategy is using subsidies and lower prices to maintain an ability to keep Central Asia within its strategic sphere and to preserve access.²³⁴ As will be seen, Kyrgyzstan was targeted with all these strategies by 2005.

2. Kyrgyz Political Benefits from Russian Engagement, 2005

Both the Akayev regime and the interim government, which emerged in March 2005 benefited from Russia's political support, and each relationship will be explored. Early analysis of the March 2005 change of government emphasized that at least in the short term, Kyrgyzstan's relationship with Russia would not change.

In the spring of 2002, President Akayev actively sought Russia's political support after the internal crisis surrounding the Aksy riots threatened his presidency. President Akayev declared to the rest of Central Asia that Russia should be the "strategic pillar" of the region, throwing his political allegiance directly toward Moscow. Russia, in turn, filled Akayev's need for support after both domestic and international pressure left him isolated after Aksy. Russian advisors coached Akayev on how to best control internal security, while intelligence sharing and military pledges increased.²³⁵ Kyrgyzstan secured from Russia a series of bilateral political, security, and economic agreements in 2002. This outpouring of Russian political support culminated with a high profile visit to Kyrgyzstan by President Putin in December 2002.

As the elections of 2005 approached, Russian advisors continued to play a significant role in helping President Akayev implement his campaign. Akayev actively sought the Kremlin's support for the upcoming elections during a January 2005 visit to Moscow.²³⁶ Akayev, possibly encouraged by his son and daughter, sought to stay in power by means of a "Soviet" style of politics. Although Akayev was committed to holding both parliamentary and presidential elections per se, he knew that the Russians could help him "manage" the elections to guarantee a favorable outcome before the

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Martha Brill Olcott, "Lessons of the Tulip Revolution."

²³⁶ Sergei Blagov, "Russia: Kyrgyzstan's Friend in Need?" Eurasianet *Eurasia Insight*, 26 January 2005.

voting actually began. Akayev justified this Soviet approach as a legitimate means of opposing the West's supposed manipulation of democracy through its advocacy of civil society via nongovernmental organizations.²³⁷ Witnessing recent elections in Georgia and Ukraine, President Akayev was making it clear he did not want any "exported revolutions" to occur in Kyrgyzstan under his tenure.²³⁸

Russian consultants in Kyrgyzstan sought to help Akayev emerge from the parliamentary elections with a legislature loyal to him and his elite. Since 2003 these Russian consultants had coached Akayev's political managers on guiding the elections process, advising on items such as constitutional amendments stipulating regulations on opposition parties and legalizing barriers to large public gatherings.²³⁹ Akayev also attempted to curb the media's influence in the upcoming election. For example, both the cut-off of electricity to the Freedom House printing press and the removal of Radio Free Europe's transmitting frequencies in Kyrgyzstan are attributed to Akayev's efforts to control the election outcome.²⁴⁰ All these tactics came under the tutelage of Moscow's political elite.

President Akayev was not the only Kyrgyz political force seeking Russian support. Members of Akayev's opposition also began to court Russia's favor leading up to the February 2005 parliamentary elections. A week before Akayev's visit to Moscow, opposition candidate and eventual interim President Kurmanbek Bakiev also visited the Kremlin, meeting with President Putin and pledging his support for the Kyrgyz-Russian relationship.²⁴¹ Putin, in turn, showed his willingness to work with the opposition by hosting the delegation before meeting with Akayev. After the interim government secured its position, the bonds with Russia were further strengthened. Interim Foreign Minister Roza Otunbaeva paid an official visit to Moscow shortly after assuming control of the government to reaffirm Kyrgyzstan's commitment to Russia, thanking Russia for

²³⁷ Daniel Kimmage, testimony presented at "Kyrgyzstan's Revolution: Causes and Consequences – Hearing of the United State Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe" 7 April 2005.

²³⁸ Gulnoza Saidazimova, "Kyrgyzstan: Is Bishkek Moving Toward Russia Ahead of Elections?" Eurasianet *Eurasia Insight*, 15 February 2005.

²³⁹ Martha Brill Olcott, "Lessons of the Tulip Revolution."

²⁴⁰ Daniel Kimmage, "The Failure of a Managed Democracy," RFE/RL Features Article, 12 April 2005.

²⁴¹ Blagov, "Russia: Kyrgyzstan's Friend in Need?"

its low-key position during the March 2005 unrest.²⁴² Additionally, interim President Bakiev met with Putin again during the 60th anniversary of the Allied World War II Victory in Europe commemoration ceremony in Moscow.

Kyrgyzstan's wariness toward Uzbekistan continued in 2005, and both the Akayev regime and the interim government sought Russia's assistance to counter their unpredictable neighbor. Bishkek was able to address one of its weakest positions vis-à-vis Uzbekistan with Russian help. In 2003, Russian natural gas giant Gazprom signed an agreement with the Kyrgyz government to build a pipeline from Russia, which would provide a significant percentage of Kyrgyzstan's natural gas needs. This deal allows Kyrgyzstan to break away from Uzbekistan's monopoly as Kyrgyzstan's supplier of natural gas, eliminating the random gas shutoffs Uzbekistan was prone to level on Kyrgyzstan.²⁴³

In the post-9/11 security environment, Uzbekistan became an enthusiastic supporter of U.S. operations in the region. Uzbekistan viewed the United States as a legitimate and credible security provider, openly criticizing the hollow security structures offered under Russian leadership. In turn, Russia found itself unable to influence Uzbekistan's external policy.²⁴⁴ Uzbekistan's alignment with the United States troubled Kyrgyzstan, who was fearful that the U.S. security blanket would empower Uzbek President Karimov to take excessive liberty to bully its eastern neighbor.²⁴⁵ Thus, Kyrgyzstan's decision to allow the Russian Air Force to lease Kant Airbase for 20 years has as much weight as a message to Uzbekistan as it does from its declared anti-terrorism charter.²⁴⁶

The interim government also sought Russian assistance in its relations with Uzbekistan. In May 2005, Uzbek security forces violently crushed an angry protest in the town of Andijon, with deaths estimated to be between 150 and 200 people. In the wake

²⁴² Claire Bigg, "Russia/Kyrgyzstan: Foreign Ministers Discuss Direction of Future Ties," RFE/RL Features Article, 11 April 2005.

²⁴³ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, 103.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 89.

²⁴⁵ Rumer, "The Powers in Central Asia," 64.

²⁴⁶ Plater-Zyberk, 11-12.

of the strong Uzbek government response, hundreds of refugees crossed the border into Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz interim government, fearful of instability in the region and wary of expanded violence in the volatile Ferghana Valley, began negotiations with the Kremlin over the potential stationing of up to 1000 Russian soldiers in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh.²⁴⁷ Kyrgyz leaders are skeptical of their ability to handle mass unrest should instability in Uzbekistan overflow into Kyrgyzstan, and are preemptively turning to the one nation who would potentially contribute to crisis control in the region.

3. Kyrgyz Economic Benefits from Russian Engagement, 2005

a. Kyrgyz Trade with Russia, 2005

Russia continued to be Kyrgyzstan's principal trading partner in 2005. In the post-9/11 push toward greater cooperation by Presidents Akayev and Putin, both leaders highlighted the growing trade bonds between the two countries. President Putin, in an address during a Kyrgyz-Russian summit, highlighted the 49% increase in trade between 2001 and 2002, emphasizing agriculture, power, waste management, and defense as sectors of growing importance between the two nations.²⁴⁸ By 2003, Kyrgyz exports to Russia were at U.S. \$97.02 million, representing 16.7 % of all exports and third among all of Kyrgyzstan's trading partners.²⁴⁹ The Kyrgyz still predominantly focused on exporting agricultural products and value added goods to Russia. Kyrgyzstan continued to import more from Russia than any other nation in 2003, with U.S. \$176.13 million of goods brought in, including critical energy imports.²⁵⁰

b. Russian Investment in Kyrgyzstan, 2005

Kyrgyzstan successfully increased its marketability to Russian investors since 2001, although some analysts note that Russian benevolence in investment is as much politically motivated as economic.²⁵¹ During President Putin's December 2002 visit to Bishkek, the Kremlin's trade advocate Anatoly Chubais was brought along to help

²⁴⁷ Erica Marat, "Reports Suggest Moscow Wants New Base in Kyrgyzstan," Jamestown Foundation *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 24 May 2005.

²⁴⁸ O'Malley and McDermott

²⁴⁹ IMF, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook*, 290-291.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, 104.

spark Russian interest in Kyrgyzstan. Additionally, a Russian-Kyrgyz economic forum was held in October 2003, with several Russian businessmen brought to Bishkek in order to expand trade and investment opportunities by Russian entrepreneurs.²⁵²

The Russians became very interested in several projects in Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz government had been seeking foreign assistance to finish necessary repairs and improvements to multiple hydro-electric plants on the Naryn River, in addition to starting new construction projects. By October 2002, the Russian state-controlled Unified Energy Systems (headed by Chubais) signed an agreement to upgrade five power stations over a ten-year period. The following April during the Eurasian Economic Summit, contracts were signed to complete the entire construction project with Russia and Kazakhstan as the principal investors.²⁵³ In addition, Kyrgyzstan's aforementioned agreement with Gazprom involved the Russian company's commitment to also modernize the few gas fields in Kyrgyzstan in order to help increase annual domestic gas extraction to 300 million cubic meters, which would potentially serve half of Kyrgyzstan's annual needs.²⁵⁴

c. Russian Assistance to Kyrgyzstan, 2005

Kyrgyzstan's principal means of securing Russian economic assistance is through measures aimed at reducing its debt to its former ruler. Since 2001, Kyrgyzstan has been able to obtain debt reduction from Russia through two principal paths – bilateral agreements and multilateral fora. Between 2002 and 2003, Russia agreed to reschedule state bilateral debt, which was due to be paid in full by 2004. The terms of the restructuring included a new 20-year program, with a fifth of the debt converted into Russian investments. Additionally, Kyrgyzstan's hosting of the Russian airfield at Kant as part of its CSTO commitment included debt relief as part of the compensation package.²⁵⁵

Another significant debt-reduction opportunity came with the Paris Club meetings of 2005. As part of this agreement, Russia after much resistance, agreed to

²⁵² Author's interview with U.S. Department of State official, Washington D.C., 24 May 2005.

²⁵³ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, 103.

²⁵⁴ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, 104.

²⁵⁵ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, 103.

reduce Kyrgyzstan's debt owed. Like bilateral debt reduction agreements, the Paris Club agreement kept provisions for equity-for-debt programs rather than pure debt cancellation.²⁵⁶ As will be seen in the discussion of costs, this will still allow Russia some economic leverage over its much junior partner Kyrgyzstan.

4. Kyrgyz Security Benefits from Russian Engagement, 2005

a. Security Guarantees, 2005

Kyrgyzstan's security environment significantly changed since 2001. The U.S.-led campaign in Afghanistan either sparked or accelerated Kyrgyz efforts to intensify security cooperation with Russia in its wake. Although Kyrgyzstan received a renewed bilateral security guarantee from Russia in 2002, its primary avenue for securing Russian protection by 2005 was through multilateral institutions.

The old Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Collective Security Treaty (CST) was restructured in 2003 in an attempt to make it a more coherent security platform. The signatories of the new Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) sought a formal legal charter, desiring to transform the CST into regionally-focused security architecture.²⁵⁷ The CSTO included broad initiatives addressing emerging threats through a new military command structure headquartered in Moscow. Additionally, the CSTO sought to create a rapid reaction force for the Central Asian region, a common air defense system, and efforts to create common foreign, security, and defense policies.²⁵⁸

The first elements of the CSTO Rapid Deployment Force (CRDF) was the air arm established at Kant Airfield, Kyrgyzstan, which initially included a combination of air defense, ground attack, and transport aircraft.²⁵⁹ Russia declared that the task force had a dual purpose, as it is charter-bound both to provide regional air defense through its Su-27 aircraft and support to land forces with its contingent of Su-25 close air support aircraft. From Kyrgyzstan's perspective, Kant represents a definitive and tangible

²⁵⁶ Paris Club, "The Paris Club Reduces the Kyrgyz Republic's Stock of Debt," Press Release, 11 March 2005. Available online at <http://www.clubdeparis.org/rep-upload/PRKyrgyz11March05.pdf> Last accessed May 2005.

²⁵⁷ O'Malley and McDermott.

²⁵⁸ Roy Allison, "Regionalism, Regional Structures, and Security Management in Central Asia," *International Affairs* 80, 3 (June 2004), 471.

²⁵⁹ O'Malley and McDermott.

security guarantee from its Russian ally. President Akayev proudly proclaimed that “This [is] a certain, powerful security umbrella for Kyrgyzstan. We are now happy that our military airport in Kant has revived and very modern Russian fighters are flying over it.”²⁶⁰ A land component of the CRDF was also created, with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Armenia all earmarking a battalion of soldiers each to this standing unit.²⁶¹ Initially 1500 soldiers total were designated for use by the signatories with a coordination staff in Bishkek.²⁶² There are suggestions that the ground component might grow to 3000 troops in the future.²⁶³

From the outset, the CRDF was created with an anti-terrorist charter in mind, and their arrangement of forces and their recurring training support this design. As part of this focus, the organization created an anti-terrorist center in Bishkek with the purpose of coordinating intelligence activities. Despite the fall of the Taliban and the decrease on Al Qaeda’s influence in Afghanistan, Russia still sees the region as a breeding ground for a new generation of terrorists and seeks to face the challenge in Central Asia before it spreads to Russia.²⁶⁴

The CSTO was not the only regional security organization to update its charter. Even before 9/11, the members of the Shanghai Five treaty sought to crystallize their partnership into a more structured security organization. The Shanghai Five became the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in the summer of 2001. The organization, which also added Uzbekistan to its ranks, declared its commitment to the “suppression of terrorism, separatism, and [religious] extremism.”²⁶⁵ With this focus, the SCO also created an anti-terrorist center based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and has held several anti-terror exercises.

²⁶⁰ O’Malley and McDermott.

²⁶¹ Plater-Zyberk, 11.

²⁶² Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, 69.

²⁶³ Saat, 7.

²⁶⁴ Saat, 7.

²⁶⁵ Matthew Oresman, “Beyond the Battle of Talas: China’s Re-emergence in Central Asia” in Dan Burghart and Theresa Sabonis-Helf ed. *In the Tracks of Tamerlane: Central Asia’s Path to the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Center for Technology and National Security Policy, 2004), 404.

b. Military Benefits, 2005

Kyrgyzstan was able to draw several benefits for its military forces through increased security cooperation with Russia by 2005. Kyrgyzstan's principal benefit was its ability to secure access to military equipment at the same prices available to Russian forces, which is considered to be a significant political achievement for the Kyrgyz government.²⁶⁶ In addition to traditional military equipment received, Russia agreed to help Kyrgyzstan regenerate the torpedo production and testing facility on Lake Issyk-Kul, aiding the country's stagnant and depressed military-technical industry.²⁶⁷ Additionally, by mid-2002 Russia had upgraded Kyrgyzstan's air defense system, with over 100 million rubles invested in the project.²⁶⁸

Kyrgyzstan also was able to focus its anti-terrorist training through several exercises. These include command post exercises like Southern Shield, as well as more operationally-focused annual exercises like Rubezh. In Rubezh 2004, Kyrgyzstan was able to exercise its special forces as part of the larger CRDF force. The Kyrgyz military also contributed tanks, armored personnel carriers, and armed infantry fighting vehicles to the exercise. These exercises help Kyrgyzstan's military become a more coherent and lethal fighting force.²⁶⁹

5. Costs of Kyrgyz Engagement with Russia, 2005

As much as President Akayev benefited from the Kremlin's assistance and support in political affairs, he also paid a price. The cost in this case is that Akayev failed to secure Russia's complete commitment in his quest for political continuity. As early as 2004, there were indications that the Kremlin was maneuvering to open communication lines with the Kyrgyz opposition. From Russia's perspective, having stability in the leadership of Kyrgyzstan is paramount because it makes the relationship predictable. But when regimes like Akayev's begin to spend an inordinate amount of time on regime security, the relationship becomes counter-productive.²⁷⁰ The Kremlin sought contact

²⁶⁶ Allison, "Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy," 286.

²⁶⁷ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, 103.

²⁶⁸ O'Malley and McDermott.

²⁶⁹ Saat, 7-8.

²⁷⁰ Allison, "Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy," 284.

with significant opposition members in order to preserve flexibility in conducting and implementing their regional strategy.²⁷¹ A prime example of this was seen with the Kyrgyz opposition in January 2005.

President Putin's decision to host opposition leader and eventual interim President Kurmanbek Bakiev a week before President Akayev visited Moscow was intended as a message to Akayev and his regime. Putin was indicating a certain indifference to Akayev's rule. He had been recently been unhappy with President Akayev's "fence sitting," preferring the Kyrgyz president to make a stronger and deeper commitment to Russia at the expense of the United States. Russia too might not want to have pinned all of its hopes on Akayev, preferring stability in Kyrgyzstan over regime security.²⁷² Although it is clear that Russia assisted Akayev's pre-election strategy, it appears, as one U.S. government analyst perceived the situation, that the Russians "did not send the A team" to Kyrgyzstan.²⁷³ President Akayev paid the price for Russia's inaction, unable to convince his protector that his continuity was in Russia's best interest.

The role of ethnic minorities continues to be a point of contention between Kyrgyzstan and Russia. Kyrgyzstan still desires to maintain and empower its Russian minority, and Russia too supports this favorable treatment of its diaspora. The events of March 2005 showed, however, that a willingness by Moscow to intervene in Kyrgyz domestic politics to protect its citizens still exists. During the riots and looting in the wake of the parliamentary elections, some Russian individuals and businesses were targeted by protestors. This prompted the Russian Ambassador to publicly proclaim that there was a formal need to protect Russian citizens in Kyrgyzstan. The return of Feliks Kulov, who is sympathetic to the needs of the Russian minority, as leader of Kyrgyz security services was enough to stabilize the situation. The fact that the Russian Ambassador would openly call for Russian protection revalidated the latent power of the diaspora issue.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Allison, "Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy," 284.

²⁷² Author's interview with U.S. Department of State Official, Washington, D.C., 24 May 2005.

²⁷³ Author's interview with U.S. Department of State Official, Washington, D.C., 24 May 2005.

²⁷⁴ Author's interview with U.S. Department of State Official, Washington, D.C., 24 May 2005.

The number of ethnic Kyrgyz working in Russia has also significantly increased, with an estimated 500,000 Kyrgyz migrant laborers working in Russia. Although this workforce does significantly contribute to Kyrgyzstan's economy, with remittances estimated at 10% of the nation's GDP, it also opens Kyrgyzstan up to vulnerability.²⁷⁵ Russia has been known to use these situations to its favor. For example, Russia imposed severe visa restrictions on Georgian citizens as a political lever.²⁷⁶ Kyrgyz leaders are attempting to preempt such scenarios by pursuing dual citizenship options for its citizens, but are still at the whim of the Russians if they decide to lever such influence.

In 2005, Kyrgyzstan still carries an economic burden with Russia. Although Kyrgyzstan attempted to diversify its economy since 2001, it was not successful enough to break its dependence on Russia's economic health. Russia's economy continues to be sustained by the energy sector. But any future reverberations in the global energy market would certainly prove difficult for Russia's economy. A significant recession in Russia's economy would in turn impact Kyrgyzstan's fragile economy primarily because of the continued dominant trade ties between the two countries as well as Kyrgyzstan's reliance on energy supplies from Russia and Kazakhstan.

Kyrgyzstan still remains susceptible to the whims and desires of Russia and their economic priorities. For example, Kyrgyzstan was not invited to join Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Ukraine in the proposed Single Economic Space. This will continue to provide challenges for tariff negotiations since Kyrgyzstan remains isolated as a WTO member while those other countries are not.

Finally, Kyrgyzstan's debt to Russia continues to be a significant liability. Some officials question if Kyrgyzstan's debt gives Russia any real leverage, noting that Russia will have a hard time "drawing blood from a stone."²⁷⁷ Recent attempts to force debt repayment through capital and equity swaps however might actually enable Russia to have a long-term influence capability in Kyrgyzstan. Many of the equity-for-debt exchanges involve Kyrgyzstan's transfer of idle Soviet factories to the Russians. There

²⁷⁵ Anders Aslund, "The Kyrgyz Republic: Reinforce Economic Growth through Lower Taxes and Better Governance," United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report, 17 June 2004.

²⁷⁶ International Crisis Group (ICG), "Kyrgyzstan's Political Crisis: An Exit Strategy," ICG Asia Report No. 37, 20 August 2002, 20 (footnote 94).

²⁷⁷ Author's interview with U.S. Embassy Official, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 1 June 2005.

are also Russian attempts to acquire primary shares of more important sectors. For example, there have been increased attempts at Russian efforts to secure primary shares of petroleum distribution and retail in Kyrgyzstan. Both Russian attempts to revitalize Kyrgyz factories and the control of critical markets like petroleum distribution open Kyrgyzstan up to long-term influence and manipulation by Russian businesses.²⁷⁸

Kyrgyzstan's security costs with Russia in 2005 parallel its political costs, since security protection from Russia is driven by Russia's initiative and not by Kyrgyzstan's needs. Despite the rhetoric otherwise, Kyrgyzstan is subject to Russia's fickleness on whether it will receive the full support of its Russian colleagues. The evidence suggests that Russian words are louder than their actions. For example, the bilateral security agreements signed between Russia and Kyrgyzstan are described as "broad and bland," without definitive commitments from Russia to protect Kyrgyzstan.²⁷⁹ Multilateral security guarantees in which Kyrgyzstan secures Russia's security commitments are also built on shaky grounds.

The political viability of the CSTO is challenged by many analysts. To begin, many observers doubt whether Russia would be willing to sacrifice its ability to act unilaterally for the meager benefits received through multilateral institutions.²⁸⁰ As Russia observes the United States reserve its right to act unilaterally, the Kremlin too wants to maintain this option to address future security concerns. Additionally, CIS security structures like the CSTO have historically lacked concrete implementation mechanisms. Protocols delineating responsibilities and commitments in CIS documents are often worded by non-binding language, giving the participants ample opportunities to not participate in collective security.²⁸¹ The CSTO is also weakened by its partial membership. The fact that the organization does not include Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan undermines its regional viability.²⁸² Uzbekistan is arguably the most

²⁷⁸ Author's interview with U.S. Embassy Official, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 1 June 2005.

²⁷⁹ Allison, "Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy," 289.

²⁸⁰ Allison, "Regionalism, Regional Structures, and Security Management in Central Asia," 468.

²⁸¹ Allison, "Regionalism, Regional Structures, and Security Management in Central Asia," 469.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 471.

powerful of the five Central Asian Republics, and its absence in the collective security effort highlights the difficulty of achieving consensus in the region.

Finally, the U.S.-led Global War on Terror itself challenges the relevance of the CSTO. Parallel and competing security architectures now exist in Central Asia.²⁸³ Although the CSTO might be considered the authentic regional security force, it is the presence of the United States which the Central Asian states have responded to. None of the Central Asian states supporting U.S. operations are asking the Americans to leave. All Central Asian states value their contacts with the United States and the West. For example, all Central Asian states sent representatives to NATO's Prague Summit in 2002, showing their willingness to interact with an organization of which they are not even members.²⁸⁴ All these indicators cast doubt on Russia's actual willingness to address security threats in Central Asia, leading one to believe that the CSTO acts as a Russian attempt to bind Kyrgyzstan to Moscow without actually giving it the legitimate security guarantee it needs.

In addition to doubts on the CSTO's political viability, many observers also doubt the military capabilities of the CSTO. The Russian experience in the Tajik civil war and its ongoing operations in Chechnya lead many to question the capabilities of the Russian armed forces to handle the low-intensity threats expected in Central Asia.²⁸⁵ The capabilities of the Russian Air Force deployment to Kant are also questioned. Notably absent in the Russian deployment is any helicopter force.²⁸⁶ There are no assault helicopters in the contingent, which are often the airborne weapon of choice when supporting ground forces opposing insurgents. Additionally, there are no transport helicopters like Mi-8s, which could rapidly move soldiers around the mountainous terrain. The conventional forces which are at Kant lack any significant precision armament capability. Additionally, many observers note the state of disrepair of the Russian deployment, with most of the aircraft inoperative and not flying.²⁸⁷

²⁸³ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, 95.

²⁸⁴ Jonson, *Vladimir Putin and Central Asia*, 95.

²⁸⁵ Allison, "Regionalism, Regional Structures, and Security Management in Central Asia," 472.

²⁸⁶ O'Malley and McDermott.

²⁸⁷ Author's interview with U.S. Embassy Official, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 30 May 2005.

In sum, Kyrgyzstan is not pleased with Russian attempts at hegemony masked under a multilateral umbrella. But Kyrgyzstan is also not in a position to ask or question otherwise.²⁸⁸ Bishkek readily perceives the sporadic nature of Russia's commitment, but chooses to continue with such an arrangement because it feels it has no other option.

6. Assessment of the Kyrgyz-Russian Relationship, 2005

Kyrgyzstan's relationship with Russia in 2005 is determined to be "sensitive." Across all three dimensions, the benefits or potential benefits remain advantageous. But all three dimensions are strongly subjected to Russia's willingness or indifference to assist Kyrgyzstan. The absence of specific Russian commitment in each of the dimensions significantly impacts Kyrgyzstan's domestic and external affairs. Political indifference contributed to the fall of the government, while security indifference leaves Kyrgyzstan doubtful of Russian support but desperate for the potential of its commitment. Kyrgyzstan still remains acutely intertwined to Russia's economy, for better or for worse. In all cases, the commitment is sporadic. Kyrgyzstan is still drawn to this arrangement because it cannot change the nature of the relationship and it lacks any viable regional alternative to replace Russia. Without significant options but in clear need of assistance across all three dimensions, Kyrgyzstan remains sensitive to Russia's initiative.

²⁸⁸ Allison, "Regionalism, Regional Structures, and Security Management in Central Asia," 473.

V. CONCLUSION

A. DATA FINDINGS

Reviewing the results, Kyrgyzstan was considered “not-sensitive” with its relationship with the United States in January 2001. By May 2005, this relationship had become “sensitive.” The depth of Kyrgyz sensitivity to the United States in 2005 is moderate, suggesting the potential exists for a further increase in vulnerability. Kyrgyzstan’s relationship with Russia, on the other hand, was “sensitive” in both January 2001 and May 2005. Although Kyrgyz sensitivity to Russia was strong in both cases, the evidence suggests that Kyrgyzstan’s vulnerability deepened by 2005 due to the high costs in all three dimensions evaluated. In 2001, only two dimensions (security and economic) were deemed costly. Kyrgyzstan is considered to have an increased vulnerability with the United States since 2001, while maintaining a deep vulnerability with Russia during the same timeframe.

Applying these results to the cross-case outcome table (Table 3) in Chapter II indicates that Kyrgyzstan perceives itself to live in a realist world. In turn, its behavior suggests that the country pursues, as in cross-case outcome #4, a cautious hedge betting strategy in its relationships with Russia and the United States. The expectation is that although Kyrgyzstan is increasing its relationship and its vulnerability with the United States, it is also methodically sustaining its relationship with Russia at the same time. If Kyrgyzstan does perceive itself to be in a realist world, then quantifiable realist behavior should be identifiable in their foreign policy. Kyrgyzstan’s behavior can be possibly explained by multiple realist theories.

B. THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS OF KYRGYZ FOREIGN POLICY BEHAVIOR

Although Stephen Walt’s principle proposition is that states balance against threats instead of power, he also argued that small and weak states are likely candidates to bandwagon. The evaluation of Kyrgyz behavior after 11 September 2001 shows that it is actually balance of threat behavior that is seen in Kyrgyzstan’s relations with Russia. Russia is not the threat; Uzbekistan is. Kyrgyzstan’s balancing with Russia against Uzbekistan is seen through several behaviors. For example, attempts to relieve Kyrgyz

reliance on Uzbek natural gas by strengthening energy ties with Russia is a balancing indicator. Additionally, Kyrgyz discussions of a potential Russian Army deployment to the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh to prevent Uzbek instability from destabilizing Kyrgyzstan shows a Kyrgyz desire to balance Uzbekistan with Russian assistance. Finally, the U.S. commitment to Uzbekistan following 9/11 contributes to this balance of threat behavior. Kyrgyzstan worries that Uzbek President Karimov might expand the mandate of his partnership with the United States and use the support to manipulate regional affairs. Kyrgyzstan, of course, cannot rely on its relationship with the United States itself to assuage these fears. Kyrgyzstan turns to Russia instead to help balance against potential Uzbek aggressiveness, who itself also prefers to minimize Uzbek influence in Central Asia.

Steven David's omnibalancing theory also has some applicability to post-9/11 Kyrgyz foreign policy behavior. Two of the three traits David described in the behavior of Third World leaders are seen in Kyrgyz policy. Considering external balancing against an internal threat, David claims that to focus all their effort on the most pressing domestic threats Third World leaders will "appease international allies of their domestic opponents."²⁸⁹ In Kyrgyzstan, the two primary ethnic minority groups at face value seem likely candidates for domestic threats. But in Kyrgyzstan, these groups are seen more as conduits to their native state rather than a threat itself. Thus, Kyrgyz elite policy toward the two minority groups is part of their broader strategy toward the home country. The Kyrgyz language policy amply proves where Kyrgyz priorities sit.

Kyrgyzstan's favorable treatment and institutionalization of the Russian language is diametrically opposed to the evolving societal composition within Kyrgyzstan, where the Uzbek population swells while the Russian population contracts. The Kyrgyz government shows no interest in offering the same language rights to its Uzbeks citizens. A favorable language policy for Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan would provide incentive for Uzbek President Karimov to interfere in Kyrgyz affairs, since he is already suspicious of

²⁸⁹ David, 236.

the Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan.²⁹⁰ Kyrgyzstan views its Uzbek minority not as a threat, but as a liability when dealing with Uzbekistan itself. When asked if the Kyrgyz government would consider expanding language rights to Uzbeks, one Kyrgyz government official quickly and strongly said “no!...we have already given them everything they have asked for.”²⁹¹ A favorable Russian language policy on the other hand helps maintain Russia’s benevolence while sustaining a skilled and educated portion of their workforce. Although Kyrgyz language policies do not directly support balancing against an internal threat, they do support mitigating an external threat through a domestic group.

Another of David’s propositions suggests that Third World elite survival might supersede the priorities of the state at any given time. The furor around Kyrgyzstan’s flawed 2005 parliamentary elections can potentially be seen in this light. President Akayev made a conscious decision to oppose traditional free and fair elections which he perceived to be methods of Western destabilization. To assist his resistance of “exported democracies,” Akayev chose to seek Russian assistance in his quest to manage the elections. Akayev, though, misinterpreted public discontent with economic conditions and with the role of his family in Kyrgyz politics. Seeking Russian assistance was motivated by regime survival and what is good for Akayev. The public disagreed, and many publicly voiced while a few violently indicated their opposition.

Even though Kyrgyzstan’s behavior indicates strong realist perceptions, does it necessarily mean it completely foregoes complex interdependence strategies? The evidence suggests that although Kyrgyzstan attempts to use complex interdependence approaches, its capacity to bring tangible results through them is limited. Two points of complex interdependency help relate this point.

Keohane and Nye indicated that a state, given a superior position on one issue, could leverage that position through issue-linkage to glean benefits unrelated to the original issue. Kyrgyzstan’s geography is such a case, given the reinvigorated strategic

²⁹⁰ For example, President Karimov accused Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan of participating in the May 2005 uprising in Andijon, Uzbekistan and has long criticized Kyrgyzstan of harboring Uzbek extremists in southern Kyrgyzstan. See *Eurasia Insight*, “Kyrgyzstan concerned about spillover from Andijon,” 19 May 2005 and Jim Nichol, “Unrest in Uzbekistan: Context and Implications,” Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress RS22161, 8 June 2005, 4-5.

²⁹¹ Interview with Kyrgyz government official, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 2 June 2005.

interest in Central Asia after 9/11. Both the prosecution of Operation Enduring Freedom and America's ongoing program seeking future global access gives Kyrgyzstan something the United States wants – access to Central Asia. However, Kyrgyzstan has not used this position in a way to push additional benefits, which it needs. Former U.S. Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan John O'Keefe indicated that Kyrgyzstan in no way attempted to leverage stipulations and quid-pro-quo caveats on the U.S. representatives during the negotiation for the airbase at Manas, noting how this contrasted the position of U.S. representatives in Uzbekistan.²⁹² The significant increase in U.S. assistance funds during FY2002 came out of the graciousness of the U.S. Congress, not the insistence of the Kyrgyz government.²⁹³

The evidence also suggests that the Kyrgyz have not maximized the Russian deployment to Kant for additional benefits. As indicated before, the Kyrgyz secured unknown amounts of debt relief for the Russian lease at Kant. Outside of the debt relief, the Kyrgyz have not pursued other pressing needs through issue-linkage. A developed complex interdependence strategy would have been indicated by Kyrgyz attempts to use the Kant deployment as a negotiation tool to secure gains such as renegotiated tariff policies with Russia or a formal and legal bilateral security guarantee. None of these occurred with the Kant issue, contributing to impression of the weak use of complex interdependence strategies.

The second weak use of complex interdependence approaches concerns international organizations. Kyrgyzstan belongs to multiple international organizations. Within these organizations, however, Kyrgyzstan is unable to either successfully lobby its case or negotiate for better positions. Two examples help elucidate this point. Kyrgyzstan belongs to multiple security organizations. These include formal security associations like the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as well as informal participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP). Despite the multiple security avenues, Kyrgyzstan still lacks

²⁹² Author's interview with former U.S. Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan John O'Keefe, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 3 June 2005. The Ambassador contrasted President Akayev's approach with that of President Karimov, who approached U.S. negotiators with a list of requirements to be met before any base decision would be agreed upon.

²⁹³ Ibid.

a security organization it is confident in to provide physical security for its territory and its people. Both the CSTO and SCO are questionable in their commitment to assisting Kyrgyzstan in its time of need. Even the PfP, which provides invaluable training and exposure to the Kyrgyz military, fails to provide a guarantee for Kyrgyz security. Kyrgyzstan hopes that multiple memberships in these organizations might allow a medium for a true security guarantee to emerge should the country find itself in that position.

Another insufficient use of international organizations is Kyrgyzstan's use of its position in the World Trade Organization (WTO). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace economist Anders Aslund, who also consults for the United Nations Development Programme in Kyrgyzstan, has argued for the past several years that Kyrgyzstan must use its current membership in the WTO to its advantage. He believes that "The Kyrgyz Republic needs to pursue a highly liberal trade policy and exploit international organizations, notably the WTO, to a maximum to get as open markets as possible." He notes as well that Kyrgyzstan is under-represented at the WTO in Geneva, Switzerland.²⁹⁴ There are few indications that the Kyrgyz WTO position has been used successfully with either Russia or Kazakhstan. One U.S. embassy official indicated that Kyrgyz representatives have tried to articulate their position in WTO negotiations over high Russian tariffs. Unfortunately for the Kyrgyz, many of the other WTO members in the negotiations did not support Kyrgyzstan on certain tariff issues and, consequently, "Kyrgyzstan's pull did not go far."²⁹⁵ Without support from larger states, Kyrgyzstan's position in WTO negotiations will continue to be marginalized.

C. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings suggest Kyrgyzstan perceives itself to be living in a realist world and, in the case of its post-9/11 foreign policy behavior, is cautiously hedge betting its strategy with the United States and Russia. Kyrgyzstan has deliberately increased its U.S. engagement strategy and, in turn, increased its vulnerability to the United States. The Kyrgyz political, economic, and security dimensions with the United States have all

²⁹⁴ Anders Aslund, "The Kyrgyz Republic: Reinforce Economic Growth through Lower Taxes and Better Governance," United Nations Development Programme for Kyrgyzstan annual report, 17 June 2004.

²⁹⁵ Author's interview with U.S. Embassy official, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 2 June 2005.

matured since 9/11, and the country can be considered for better or worse vulnerable to the United States. The theoretical absence of U.S. political support, economic assistance, or military leadership would be moderately detrimental for Kyrgyzstan, which would struggle to pay the costs for the absence of those dimensions after their removal. During the same timeframe Kyrgyzstan also sustained its relationship with Russia and, in certain cases, increased its vulnerability to its former ruler. Kyrgyzstan showed either no willingness or ability to decrease its vulnerability with Russia through new or strengthened relations with the United States. What does this bode for U.S. policy in Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan?

The first potential policy lesson from this study is that the United States should not overestimate its expected influence in Kyrgyzstan. Being a small land-locked country with limited capability to influence the behavior of great powers, Kyrgyzstan chooses to play safe bets. Kyrgyzstan would take great risks to willfully decrease its reliance on Russia through a strong U.S. relationship. Although the United States could provide much of what Kyrgyzstan needs from a great power, an American decision to abandon Kyrgyzstan would be downright tragic for them. Should Kyrgyzstan find itself in that scenario, isolated and without any great power support, it would have to humbly return to Moscow and grovel for protection. Moscow, in turn, would certainly make the most of the situation and maximize its asymmetrical weight on Kyrgyzstan. This entire scenario is one which Kyrgyzstan would like to permanently avoid. Continued close relations with Russia therefore provide the safest bet for long-term assistance and protection.

On the other hand, there are indications that a sustained U.S. engagement policy in Kyrgyzstan is beginning to pay dividends. The second policy recommendation is that the United States should continue a patient and sustained assistance and engagement strategy with Kyrgyzstan. The events of March 2005 provide proof that progress has been made from a democracy and civil society perspective since the country's independence. The indignation in the streets of Bishkek was solely the voice of the Kyrgyz people.

What is important for the United States, however, is that the thirteen years of financial assistance and moral support given to Kyrgyzstan helped create a favorable environment for the Kyrgyz people to raise their own voice. As Edil Baisalov, President of the non-governmental organization (NGO) alliance Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society (Kyrgyzstan), stated before a hearing at the U.S. House of Representatives,

We believe that the assistance provided by the United States directly to Kyrgyz civic groups and indirectly through NGOs...was instrumental in helping creating the space for political dialogue, raising civic awareness and providing support for civil society.²⁹⁶

Baisalov also identified the positive role of U.S. Ambassadorial support in publicly promoting democracy and free elections in Kyrgyzstan.²⁹⁷ Dr. Martha Brill Olcott also highlights the payback from a long-term engagement strategy, noting that...

The critical factor in Kyrgyzstan was NGO groups were so deeply rooted that there was no prospect of outlying them in the election campaign, even though their life was made miserable oftentimes.²⁹⁸

The underlying theme of both vignettes is that the maintenance and sustainment of such programs is critical. One NGO coordinator in Bishkek, a Kyrgyz citizen, freely admitted that “the local market is not ready” to sustain itself yet, adding that U.S. and Western support keeps the quality of both the programs and the people high.²⁹⁹ A U.S. Embassy official also identified the limited capability of the NGO community to stand on its own, optimistically calling the community a “growth industry.”³⁰⁰ Kyrgyz civil society and the media made a difference identifying a flawed election. Although the actual efforts were by Kyrgyz citizens, U.S. policymakers should recognize the impact of over a decade of U.S. assistance on empowering the process for civil society to thrive. Continued assistance can only further engrain these norms.

²⁹⁶ Edil Baisalov, Statement before the House Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, 5 May 2005.

²⁹⁷ Baisalov.

²⁹⁸ Martha Brill Olcott, “Kyrgyzstan’s Revolution: Causes and Consequences,” Testimony at the United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission) Hearing, Washington D.C., 7 April 2005.

²⁹⁹ Author’s interview with local head of U.S.-funded NGO, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 3 June 2005.

³⁰⁰ Author’s interview with U.S. Embassy Official, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 1 June 2005.

Another long-term U.S. assistance program which might be making inroads in Kyrgyzstan is the investment in Kyrgyz security and military forces. U.S. security assistance programs are tailored to critical needs agreed upon by both Kyrgyz and U.S. representatives. These programs are also slowly beginning to pay off. One U.S. embassy official related how visible changes are being seen in the Kyrgyz military and security services. He found their forces to be significantly more professional and Western-leaning in outlook in his tenure, reaching the “crawl-to-walk” stage in their development. He also attributed the fact that Kyrgyz security forces did not shoot Kyrgyz civilians during the 24 March 2005 riots to Kyrgyz exposure to Western programs such as the Marshall Center in Germany.³⁰¹ American investment and assistance is providing critical infrastructure and training facilities for the Kyrgyz military. In the opinion of the same official, no other nation is able to match U.S. assistance programs for the Kyrgyz forces, and he is confident young soldiers and officers will remember the American assistance 10-15 years in the future when they are in positions of importance.³⁰²

Sustainment involves a long-term U.S. commitment. The general consensus is that it will take a generation or two of Kyrgyz exposure to U.S. assistance to significantly transform their worldview. Given recent public opinion polls, that assessment might be conservative. When asked which country is the most important international relations partner for Kyrgyzstan, 84% responded overwhelmingly with Russia. The United States was third with 3%, behind Kazakhstan’s 5%.³⁰³ Along similar lines, when asked whom Kyrgyzstan should give priority to in its future international relations, 76% of the respondents also answered Russia, with the United States only receiving 4% of the answers. “Central Asia” collectively was second with 10%.³⁰⁴ Finally, 17% of survey respondents identified the United States as “the biggest threat to Kyrgyzstan,” second

³⁰¹ Author’s interview with U.S. Embassy Official, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 30 May 2005.

³⁰² Author’s interview with U.S. Embassy Official, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 30 May 2005.

³⁰³ International Republican Institute (IRI)/Baltic Surveys Ltd./The Gallup Organization, “Kyrgyzstan National Voters Study,” April 2005. The face-to-face survey was conducted 15-25 April 2005 among 1500 Kyrgyzstan residents. The respondents were 18 years and older and were registered voters. The margin of error does not exceed 3%.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

behind China's 35%. For the same question, Russia only received 1% of the survey answers.³⁰⁵ Although these are public opinion polls and not surveys of Kyrgyz elites or policy makers, they nonetheless paint a strong Kyrgyz affinity toward Russia.

Overcoming public perceptions is even more challenging when it has to be done half a world away. Geography matters for Kyrgyzstan. U.S. Embassy officials felt that the Kyrgyz see themselves simply as "a small country in a rough neighborhood," and will pursue what is appropriate for their survival.³⁰⁶ Kyrgyz officials agree with their American counterparts. When asked how Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy will change with the country's new leadership, former Ambassador Abdrisaev indicated that nothing will change. Kyrgyzstan, he said, is "figuring out just how to survive."³⁰⁷ The United States should recognize that while Kyrgyzstan's survival may depend on its relations with Russia, the United States can influence the nature of Kyrgyzstan's political and military development through a sustained long-term engagement.

³⁰⁵ International Republican Institute (IRI)/Baltic Surveys Ltd./The Gallup Organization, "Kyrgyzstan National Voters Study," April 2005.

³⁰⁶ Author's interview with U.S. Embassy Official, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 1 June 2005.

³⁰⁷ Author's interview with Ambassador Baktybek Abdrisaev, Washington D.C., 27 May 2005.

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